

FRIDAY SERMONS

BY

Allama Hakim Abdullah Rashid
Nawab Makki.

TRANSLATED & EDITED

BY

INAMULLAH KHAN, B. A.

PUBLISHED BY

THE JAMIAT-UL-ULEMA OF
BURMA,

312, Mogul Street, RANGOON.

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The Jamiat-ul-Ulema, Buima is to be congratulated on this its latest addition to the Islamic tracts series. The book contains English translations of the Arabic sermons delivered before Friday congregations by Maulana Hafiz Hakeem Abdulla Rashid Nawab Makki Sahab, Pesh Imam of the Soortee Sunni Jumma Masjid, Rangoon. The translation has been ably rendered into English from an Urdu translation of the original Arabic text, by Mr Inamullah Khan, B.A., who has spared no pains to preserve the spirit of the original.

The sermons have been prepared by the Maulana Sahab keeping in view the present needs of the Muslims. They comprise all aspects of Islam, and offers solutions for the diverse moral, social and economic problems that perplex the mind of the modern Muslim to-day. Each sermon is a brief study in itself, and based as it is on the Holy Quran and Hadis, offers a splendid means of unifying the scattered forces of the Muslims and rejuvenating them. The sermons as a whole aim at infusing fresh vigour into the drooping bodies of the present day Muslims. A careful study of them will, it is hoped, enable the reader to imbibe the true spirit of Islam, thereby enabling him to appreciate more fully the real import and significance of the teachings of Islam.

YUSUF D. MOTALA,

Editor,

The "Rangoon Daily News"

Rangoon,

Dated, 11th June 1935.

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful and Compassionate.

FRIDAY SERMONS.

THE ESSENTIALS FOR A MUSLIM

I

All human excellences are gifts of God and as such He, the giver, is deserving of all praise. It is He who sent Muhammed (may peace be upon him) as a guide to humanity making him the ideal Prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished characteristics.

And because the Muslims have been seeking and shall seek guide in the footsteps of their great Prophet, hence in all the sermons, prayers are said to honour his blessed memory. It is as a return of thanks that every Muslim sends 'Darood' to the Prophet for his blessings to mankind. But the real thanksgiving is to live up to the ideals set up by the Prophet. The key-stone of the edifice of Islam is the character of the Prophet. As long as one does not imbue one's self with those traits, his Islam remains incomplete. Character is the test of Islam. The character of a true Muslim must beam with truth and justice. Lady Khadija had studied the Prophet through his daily life. The test of Islam for every Muslim is his daily actions.

Once a few of his disciples told the Prophet that there was a woman who was very regular in saying her prayers and observing fast, but that she was wont to give trouble to her neighbours. To this the Prophet remarked that she was fit only for Hell, for there was no good in her.

The most praiseworthy achievement of Islam is its brotherhood based on mutual goodwill, sympathy, fellowship and friendship. The Quran declares that all Muslims are brothers, it demands better under-

standing and perseverance of peace among them. At another place, it says 'Cling ye to the chord of Allah in unity and be not divided'. Hence it is clear from this that unless there is love and sympathy among the Muslims, their corporate life cannot stand against the forces of the opposition. If from individual life no corporate strength results, the individual good carries no weight. On the other hand, it shatters the common chord to bits.

God says "Think for yourselves how you were united before and how Islam welded you in a solid fraternity." It also means that when the fraternal bond breaks and there is no love lost between the constituent members, then either it is that we have lost the blessing of Islam or our Islam is in danger.

According to the Hadis (the traditions) the chief characteristics of a Muslim are love and sympathy and the one in whom these are absent, nothing good is to be expected of him. At another place it is recorded that when a Muslim visits his brother-Muslim for Allah's sake i.e., fraternal feelings and sympathy carry him there, the angels hail him as one dwelling in Paradise and bless him so that he may become the embodiment of all that is good.

A Muslim has many rights. He is the best who gives preference to the needs of others to those of his own, gives generously out of his bounty to the needy, helps his friends, covers their faults and speaks well of them at their back, he displays sympathy and love in his talk, is awake to the needs of his friends and is forgiving, remains a help-mate to his friends while living and when dead prays for their soul, nay, takes care of the bereaved family, he displays sincerity and fidelity both outwardly and inwardly, does not involve his friends in trouble and is a source of help in their hour of need. In short a Muslim has extensive rights over his brother-Muslim at least of a greeting when one meets the other and the acceptance of invitation when invited.

When one sneezes, the other must pray for his health, when one falls ill, the other must attend and nurse him, when asked to give advice must give the

best of advice he can. In a nutshell, one must do to the other what one thinks best for one's own self and if one does not do this, he is not of the faithful.

The Prophet says: Keep away from jealousy, prejudice, fault finding and be brothers to one another as is desired by Allah. If you have done some wrong to your brother-in-faith, go and ask for his pardon, so that Allah may be pleased with you.

On another occasion, the Prophet said that the best action next to prayer is to keep love among fellow beings and to show them good-behaviour.

Once advising Ma-az, one of his disciples, the Prophet said: 'O Ma-az, be a faithful servant of God. Speak the truth, keep your word and honour your pledge, protect the rights of your neighbours, love and sympathise with the orphans, be always sweet in talk and never be harsh, get accustomed to greeting and greet in abundance. Be generous. May God make you practical.'

The above are the distinctive characteristics of a Muslim. To-day a majority of Muslims have confined Islam, only to its five pillars—'Kalima', prayers, fast, alms giving and Haj. They have unfortunately ignored the other requirements of a Muslim and hence the weakness of their corporal life and existence of divisions. There are a few who stop with mere believing but there are also others, who though seem to act, yet lack the Islamic spirit. They are they who lose the substance in quest of the shadow. They do not catch the spirit and are content with the form. Among them is not found the solidifying influence of fraternity. The wrong lies in the manner of their bringing up.

HIGH MORALS.

2

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Many praises to Him who made man the noblest of His creation. The physical, mental and spiritual make up of man abounds with potentialities for the highest development. It is as an offer of thanks to his Creator that one prostrates oneself before Him every day. Muhammed, the best and the noblest of men, was sent by God as a guide to humanity, as a prototype for others to mould themselves after him. The Prophet dyed his disciples in the dye of his own character and ordained posterity to follow in his footsteps to attain to the full human stature. May God bless his noble soul and those of his kith and kin.

Brethren in Islam! last Friday's sermon dealt with the brotherhood of Islam and the reciprocal rights of Muslims, to-day's sermon shall deal with the moral requirements of a Muslim. Make sure that Islam is the other name for the highest human perfection i.e. unless human excellences are found in ourselves, we do not deserve to be called Muslims. To be born in a Muslim house or to accept a few Muslim beliefs does not make one a Muslim. Islam came to make us perfect beings and if we fall short of that, our Islam is incomplete. We have to think over our Islam or else we will not only be disgracing ourselves but Islam as well. To save Islam from any stigma, we are in honour bound to become men in the truest sense of the term.

Humanity is not the name of a certain shape or form. It is the name of those human excellences that raise the status of man beyond angels. In the Prophet these excellences were in great abundance. Let it be made clear that simply knowing that our beloved Prophet was the ideal of human virtues and that Islamic teachings in this respect are superior to those of the sister faiths does not in any way make us perfect.

The task of a preacher or a 'Khateeb' is to lay bare the true teachings of Islam and invite the people to them. He cannot compel one to be practical. Mere education does not make one perfect, it is essential for the child to be brought up in the Islamic manner. Every one can become learned but it is an entirely different thing to get used to doing good, making

one's external and internal self the same and making human virtues surge through one's self. When a piece of wood gets dried, it is difficult to bend, the same is true of bad habits. Nonetheless it is the duty of every one to try, for, through earnest and sincere attempt anything can be achieved.

Character is the sum total of all that is good and noble with which one's individual and social life is aided and which adds to the purity of one's soul.

A good man always likes things that are good and the opposite is true with a man of the contrary nature. Good qualities like scent disseminate sweet smells around them whereas bad qualities like an awful-smelling heap disturb the peace of those round about and spreads both the contagious germs of immorality. From the company of thieves one learns but to steal. The children learn things good or bad from their surroundings.

It is because of the above reasons that the Prophet declared that Religion in reality is the other name of good character. He also said that he alone is best in faith who is best in his morals. Again he said that decay of character spoils all good works even as vinegar spoils honey.

It is said in the Quran not to tread the earth with pride for, it says, neither can you probe into the earth nor touch the sky. In other words the Quran condemns the display of false pride most unsparingly as a display of one's baser self. At another place it says that everything bad is disliked by God. No one is unaware of the results that follow moral weakness. The greatest man is he who is best in behaviour even to those who are worst in their treatment of him, and who ignores the attacks of the vile ones and blesses them that curse him. The Quran throws much light on this point.

It is recorded in the traditions that a Muslim is not from whose hands and tongue Muslims are safe. In another place, it is said that you cannot enter Paradise unless you became Faithful, and you cannot

become Faithful unless you love others "Come", says the Prophet, "and I will show you the way to love, you follow that path and there shall be growing love amongst you Greet each other, try to take the lead in it and do it in abundance" (In this there is a warning to the proud ones who wait for others to greet them and themselves hesitate to take the lead)

According to one tradition, there are four traits, the possessor of which is styled a hypocrite even the possession of any one of them makes one a hypocrite These traits are to dishonour pledges, to tell lies, to break promises and to use foul language in dispute It is said in the 'Hadis' that such a person is a hypocrite even though he may say prayers, observe fasts and claim to be a Muslim At another place, the Hadis says that he who does not know how to honour his word and pledge has no religion, nor do his prayers and fasts count for anything May Allah keep all in safety

THE HIGHEST CREATION

3

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

With the growth of sundry sciences the fact is becoming more and more clear that man is the highest form of creation He is gifted with immense potentialities for the highest growth possible He has been made the Lord of fauna and flora, in short of the whole universe Man has been given varying degrees of capacities and tendencies so as to aid the proper working of the universe

It is through the human intelligence, discovery and inventions that minerals and other hidden treasures are brought to light These in turn are utilised for the manufactures and the industrial growth of countries It is the human being that utilises the vegetable

kingdom and uses the floral ingredients. Again the human prowess utilises the animal strength for useful purposes. The Quran deals with this fact in great detail, the purpose is to show that in Islam man is given the highest status in creation beyond which there is no higher stage. The angels are also of the creation. Man with all his capacities yet remains a created being. The prophets with their nobility and excellence have surpassed even the angels in merit.

Man is a compound of matter and spirit. They in whom the spiritual supersedes the temporal are greater than the angels even, for real virtue lies in facing and battling and superseding temporal attractions. Real merit lies in fighting against human weaknesses and in escaping from the wishes of material pleasures to the supreme glory of the soul. The greatness of a man lies in his power to distinguish good from bad, in his sense of realising the consequences of certain course of action and that reason is his guiding light.

In the order of creation, man is the only responsible being. The responsibility consists of two types of excellences. One is purely spiritual where the human body and everything material is subservient to the soul. The excellence of soul lies in this that one leads a pure life, devotes his existence for the good of others and tries to attain the highest status possible for man. Even though complete resemblance between God and Man is impossible, yet by following the dictates of God and doing good one can dye oneself in the colours of the Lord.

The other form of excellence is temporal. The greatest benefit that Islam has conferred upon humanity is its declaration in unequivocal terms that attainment of these two types of excellence is in no way conflicting but it can be achieved in harmony and unison. It ordains the fulfilment of the requirements of the soul and at the same time it demands the utilisation of other forces for useful work.

Islam dwells at length on sundry principles that we need in our everyday life, such as those in regard

to justice, truth and so forth. It lays down an excellent code of ethics and ordains the people to guide themselves by that light. The Quran says that everything in the world has been created for you. At another place it says that everything created is for the glorification of the earth and for testing the nations. Every individual and nation must go forward and vie with each other in utilising the free gifts given them in the best manner.

A little pondering over this verse leads us to the conclusion that the test of one's existence is good action and the real thanksgiving of the Lord for His free gifts is the full utilisation of the natural forces thereby adding to the grace of the universe. To disuse or misuse the gifts of Nature is like keeping under a veil the benefits that are to result therefrom and this is ungratefulness to the Lord. Hence it is evident that the individual or the nation that neglects the gifts does not deserve the rule of this Universe and is denied it. The Quran very explicitly deals with the high status of man and declares a Muslim to be most deserving of the prestige. It warns them against cowardice, jealousy, prejudice and against everything that is low, and on the other hand extols the qualities of valour, service and sacrifice and noble thoughts. The Quran says that all honour is for God, for the Prophet and the Faithful. But by honour is not only meant the honour of Paradise. Considering the beginnings of Islam, one finds that poverty and meanness are not the same, neither are riches and honour. The Muslims of the early decades were mostly poor but they were rich in thoughts and determination and were honourable, they were full of the spirit of service and sacrifice. Cowardice and meanness were alien to them. But even their poverty was ephemeral, a transformation followed their movements and History bears witness to what they achieved. In the like manner by honour is meant the honour of the soul. He who is rich in heart and is great of soul is really honourable. Islam calls this honour the key-stone of the arch of both spiritual and temporal success. So long as the hearts of the Muslims were filled with noble ideas, with valour and intrepidity, with honour and a sacrificial spirit, they were a living community, masters of everything. The rise and fall of nations is largely linked with the

inner feelings. For a nation that lacks feeling and is careless, success shall be well nigh impossible. Feeling is the light that shows the path to gain honour, wealth, dominion, to it all things fly as even the moths go to a candle. Even the warmth of religion is due to this feeling. Its lack is a pitfall in the path of religious progress. The greatness of man is largely due to his way of feeling. It ill behoves man, before whom even the angels bowed that he worship any but the Lord. In Islam this is Tawheed that man shall serve Him and not bow before any one but Him.

THE EFFECT OF MORALITY ON CORPORATE LIFE

4

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

In the varying fragments of Nature and in their various aspects is evident the handiwork, the plans and designs of the great Architect of the Universe. The book of nature and the unity discerned in its divinity bear testimony to the Unity of God. This is a truth and this very Truth is called Faith. Among all those blessed with sound judgment the Prophets stand forth in the first rank. But the light thrown in the Quran and through Muhammed's lips on the mysteries of Nature stands out as a challenge to other faiths. There is no use denying the fact that Islam is the only religion that stresses the use of reason.

The world, as it is, is the result of the co-operation of many a factor. Those factors in turn are the consequences of the co-operation of other agents. From this it is clear to the thinking mind that the life of an individual disjointed from any society, in other words as a separate entity, is absurd. The law applies equally to fauna and flora, and to the animal and human kingdom. The being of every individual and his growth is depen-

ident on its contributory factors the same is true of all items, from particles of sand to the solar system. No one can afford to neglect them

It is in consideration of the above that Islamic Shariat has ordained the protection of both animate and inanimate objects. It forbids the destroying of the inorganic and commands sympathy for the living, stresses the reciprocal rights of Muslims and emphasises the preservation of better relations among fellow-men. In short, it kills the germs that eat away the vitals of human solidarity and shows measures to avoid the sad calamity. The organisation of Islam, the law of Shariat, the daily congregational prayers and those of Fridays and Eid-days, the institutions of the Haj, the Zakat and the Fast all have a bearing on fraternal solidity. So long as our hearts do not surge with human love and with the spirit of co-operation and so long as we are not ready to serve and sacrifice for the common good, healthy, corporate life is well-nigh impossible. The assemblage of the above-said traits is called character and unless we make those characteristics our own, we can be of no use either to Islam or Muslims or to humanity at large. It is because of this that Islam presses upon the people the reformation of the heart. There is a Hadis which says that there is a lump of flesh in the body which if rightly directed the whole body is properly adjusted and if not the result accordingly is the contrary. That lump of flesh is the heart. Another Hadis says that Allah does not look to your faces and forms but to your spirit and motive. One other Hadis says that actions are judged by motives.

I shall now quote a few of those verses from the Holy Quran and the Hadis that highly commend healthy inter-relations and that severely condemn petty prejudices, quarrels and fights. One verse says Fear God and wipe out your differences. The Hadis records that a Muslim bears the same relation to a brother-Muslim as do the adjacent bricks of a wall. As the bricks unite together to make a strong wall, so likewise shall the Muslims join hands to strengthen their fraternity. Every Muslim must feel the pains and sorrows of others as even the whole body is affected if a part is

injured. The well-being of a community rests on mutual goodwill, fellowship and friendship among its members. If the bricks are disjointed, the building collapses. If with the injury to one part of the body the whole body is not affected, it bespeaks the death of that body, for, listlessness and lifelessness are but one and the same thing. Once the Prophet told his disciples that he would show them something superior even to prayer, fasting and alms-giving and said, 'Edify your hearts and shun bad habits. The evil of the heart destroys the edifice of religion, nay crases it altogether. He further said even as a razor shaves off the hair so do feuds efface religion. On another occasion the Prophet said that there were some who though neither prophets nor martyrs were yet an envy even to them. When asked by the disciples as to who they were, he replied that they were those who without any blood tie and for no personal gain yet preserved love among them. By God, said the Prophet, they were in the Light whose faces shone with divine resplendence on the day of requital, they shall have no fear they are the friends of God who shall neither grieve nor fear. A Quranic verse says that if two parties are at war, make peace between them. Even then if one takes the offensive then resist the offender as long as he does not come on the path of justice and unite in peace. God loves the justice-loving. The love of justice has been termed temperance and is also referred to as the cause of blessing. The party which does not agree to the decision of the Muslims as final is dubbed as a rebel and it has no claim to the Islamic sympathy so long as it does not adhere to the just decision of the Muslims. This punishment is ordained so as to patch up the quarrels among the Muslims. Islam offers no defence or protection to the rebels and the insurgents. Islam does not empower any individual, not representing a body to condemn or charge any person. To protect the rights of the people and for the administration of law both the Government and the Courts are declared necessary. For the preservation of corporate organisation the personal views of the Judge or the Kazi are not taken as the deciding factors. Anyone who accuses another Muslim must bring four witnesses in whose presence the act was done. And if the charge proves false and fraudulent, the

complainant is to be given eighty lashes. A Muslim is thus warned that if he tries to insult the person of his brother-in-faith and undermine his prestige he must in return forego his own honour and bear the lashes.

All the above principles are laid down with the express purpose of saving the organisation of corporate life from disintegration, and aiding its growth. It is on the foundations of morality that a nation grows.

DUTIES TO GOD AND DUTIES TO MAN.

5

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

The Great God who created the world out of Nothing and made arrangements for the upkeep of the animal and human kingdoms is deserving of all thanks and praise from his creation. Men ought to remember Him and serve Him with all their heart and soul manifesting the same in their daily actions. If one does not admit this Truth the every iota of his body condemns him for his ungratefulness.

The aim of all the religions is to find God and the mission of all the prophets was to bring man closer to God and to awaken him to the duties he owes to God and to man, in this respect the prophets themselves served as models for their followers. On principles of good actions they were all one. Through the complete and the perfect book and through Muhammed did Islam spread. The Prophet re-capitulated the prin-

ciples that the people had forgotten and breathed eternity into them. He taught that God is the creator of all and as such He alone is worthy of worship and what is prayer but the other name for the highest form

of reverence It is essential for the praying ones that they be humble and meek and that love of God surges through and through them All these reverences are exclusive for God It is this that is called Tawheed (Unity of God) Islam teaches that none besides God has any claim to this reverence and adoration The Quran says Pray to God and do not make any his partner, i.e., do not give obeisance to any one besides Him This is the duty to God who in return has promised Paradise

Once the Prophet asked Ma'az if he knew what the duties of man to God were The disciple replied that God and His Prophet knew them better The Prophet then said that man's duty to God is to implicitly believe in the exclusive Unity of God and pray and serve Him and in return he is entitled to His mercy and the peace of Paradise

After believing this fundamental principle, the other principles of Islam easily follow Our actions are a display of the strength or weakness of our faith The stronger the faith, the better the actions Every tree is known by the fruit it bears and the fruit of Faith and Tawheed is good actions By Tawheed is meant the belief in the Omnipotent, the Nourisher and the Sustainer This belief in His power, glory and greatness must be exclusive and implicit One must believe that him whom He protects none can injure, whom He shelters none can harm One must also believe that He is infinite in His power, independent of all When a man believes in these, he begins to be self-confident, he follows the Right path and does his best in all his works he utilises all his powers to the best of his abilities He is grateful to his Lord and craves His mercy and help, for, the source of all human strength is in Divine hands He blesses them with success who utilise the gifts of Nature and help themselves To rely on God does not mean to vainly hope for success without exertion but to hope for success after making genuine efforts making the right use of power and forces granted him.

It must be known that God is the Lord and men but His servants We have no right to misuse the gifts given us nor to make others our slaves Man must

know what duties he owes to his fellow-beings and is in duty-bound to carry them out. The Shariat abounds with details of these two duties, duties to God and those to man. While dealing with morality I have dwelt upon the question of duties to men to some extent and will do so more in the next sermon. But as a passing remark I must say that this is the most outstanding aspect of religion and to fulfil this, man has to struggle hard both against his own self and against Satan. All selfish desires have to be sunk for its proper performance. And it is the discharge of this that shows the real worth of man, his genuineness or falsehood. In the life of all the Prophets this phase counts for most and it was this aspect of their life that served as a criterion for their followers. Right thinking and natural tendency are required for their attainment.

PURE TAWHEEED.

6

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

It has been said before that in all sermons Tawheed is reiterated and in like manner is reiterated the prophethood of Muhammad who expounded this principle most fully. Every Muslim repeats this truth in his daily prayers and besides in 'Kalima' this affords satisfaction to his soul and strengthens his self. The Kalima says that there is no God but God and Muhammed is His prophet. This forms the key-stone of the arch of Islam. Every Muslim believes that the Creator is the sublime, the infinite one and is from the beginning of the world when there was nothing but empty space. He is dependent on no forces, temporal or spiritual. His word is sufficient for the creation of anything. He first created matter and then infused spirit into it. He introduced laws of nature that stand immutable. He created the law of causation. The sun is made of matter that keeps burning and the sun in turn gives warmth to the world and shall keep doing so till the end of time.

There is a gradual evolution from the inorganic to the vegetable and thence to animal and human forms. Our body is thus the highest stage of substances of earth and is dependent for its food on the produce of the earth. Everything has the potentiality of being of some use. He made our bodies capable of receiving warmth and making use of the same. He created the counteracting forces, for instance cold for warmth. Winter in a place is followed by summer to keep the equilibrium. The ebb and flow of rivers are governed by Natural laws. By a deep study of the several phenomena we ascertain the fact that in Nature there is a system, a law that guides all forces and that there is uniformity. There is not a factor but has some purpose and all the forces work in co operation. And this uniform system, unique as it is, cannot have come into existence without some super-human force at its back. The Quran says "Can the Creator be ignorant of the actualities of the creation? He alone created all things." The implication is that there is no other Creator save God, the one, the thing that is of the creation cannot also be a creator. God is almighty, great and glorious. He is the All-knowing, the All-Abounding.

He knows all, nothing is hidden from him, even the infinitesimal dot. He is all powerful. His power knows no bounds. He is the Lord of all, the Creator, the nourisher and also the annihilator. He is eternal, from ever, for ever. He knows the limits of men. He gave man strength and rationality and ordained him to make full use of them. Man has no right to say that he is in no way responsible for the results of his actions. Man is in duty bound to see whether he has carried out his duties or not and whether he has utilised the forces given him or placed at his command. He must ponder and find out if he has been wrong anywhere. Nor can any one claim that he is free from errors. What is required is that one must take care to avoid them.

The Islamic conception of God and His attributes is most pure and sublime. It is pure monotheism. Islam gives the highest status to orphans and to prophets. Creator and creation are two different concepts. Even the highest creation cannot be deified. The creation re-

mains the creation, subservient to the Great Creator. This fact is most powerfully explained in Islam in the second part of the Kalima. Muhammed, with all the respect that he deserves and commands, is yet taken but as a servant of the Lord, His messenger Who came to show us the light Divine. In the eyes of Islam it is action that counts, for does not Islam preach that he alone is the best in the eyes of the Lord from whom the greatest good accrueth. The Kalima Shahadat says: "bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except God and I bear witness Muhammed is His Prophet and servant." This is the Muslim conception of God and this is the high standard with which he differentiates between the Creator and the created.

A Muslim does not worship any but God. He depends on Him and rests upon Him for all his needs and requirements. He looks to Him for succour and aid. A Muslim believes that God is free from all weaknesses, is pure, independent and incomparable. All human excellences are but His gifts. He has ordained that love should be the connecting link between Muslims, nay among fellow-men. The greater the man the more must he distribute the milk of human love and sympathy. God loves the prophets, the messengers, the saints and every Muslim is commanded to pay reverence to those noble souls and take them without distinction as divine luminaries, as guides of humanity and follow in their footsteps. To dishonour them is to insult them. No religion save Islam is so enlightened and so broad-based. Its scripture remains intact even after thirteen centuries, with no change even of a dot. It details at length the duties to God and to man. It honours the prophets and demands reverence. It emphasises Tawheed. It says "When people say that God has a son, tell them that they are doing a great sin. Let not the Heavens fall upon them for this libel. It is an attack on the glory of God. He is the one, the indivisible, the infinite. To Him all is subservient. Jesus and Angels and all the other prophets are but his servants. the same is true of Muhammed." This is Tawheed.

STUDY OF NATURE IN QURAN

7

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Every particle of sand and every drop of water bespeaks the Glory of God. But let us also prove that we are men and let us survey the universe. Let us praise the Lord, understand His laws and follow them. Let us try to understand how the unlettered saviour of Arabia, nay of the world, taught the illiterate folk the philosophy of Islam before which the philosophy of the great doctors and philosophers paled into insignificance.

For long did the scholars sit in vain at the feet of Plato and Aristotle to search for the simple and the right path. It was the Quran, that for the first time, laid bare the natural principles of the use of reason. It placed before man the open book of Nature and required the study of the same. For so long reason was enmeshed in theoretical hair-splits and in dogmatical probabilities. There was unquestioned obedience to authority and blind following. The heart and the mind were indulged in petty things. There were eyes and ears but blind and deaf to fact and truth. There was religion but it was tossed with the whims and fancies of the religious leaders, religion was pawned for personal ends.

The great doctors and philosophers have stressed the study of Nature made dictums, principles and laws. They defined things and set their limits but all these ended up in the ethical feuds. The things which people began to take as highly rational proved the worst canker. To add to this there grew up a section that began to anathemise reason, asserting that religion and reason were two irreconcilable

concepts. It happened so because the people went astray from the natural path of taking lessons from the book of Nature. To-day the world is once again in quest of the same path. The old method of teaching is being nullified. The Deductive method is being replaced by the Inductive and analytical study is being encouraged all over. They are trying to take facts by factors i.e. by taking all the component factors bit by bit. Instead of concluding results from given axioms and dictum, they now start with individual cases and by a study of them make general principles. Research occupies the foremost place in the world of education to-day. From this it is evident that every individual is required to keep busy in observation and study, keeping his brain always occupied and thus wasting no part of his time.

In the teaching of botany, zoology, geology and sundry other sciences such methods are being adopted as to help the students to study them not from their prescribed books but from observation and by direct method of studying.

The source of the modern method of teaching (the direct and analytical method) is the Islamic teaching. The Teacher of Islam taught the people no prescribed book, yet gave to Governments an excellent code of administration and to the world the highest principles of equity and justice. He taught the distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, legal and illegal, truth and falsehood. Read the Quran from cover to cover and you will not find a single part nay not even a page wherein you shall not find lessons on the Universe.

The Quran says that your hearts have become harder than stone. From many a stone streams spring forth, water rushes forth from many of them as they burst. There are others that shudder before the Glory of God and fall. In one place it says that there is not an iota but praises the greatness of its Creator, but oh, men you do not understand their language, not hear their voice. And another verse says: Don't you see that the Heaven and the

Earth and all that is in these, and the sun, the moon the stars, the mountains, the trees all make obeisance to their Lord (reference is to their subjection to the laws of Nature) At another place it says Don't you see that all that is in the Heaven and the Earth sing praise to the Lord In yet another place it says that in the creation of the Heaven and the Earth there are signs for the thinking ones i.e. there are lessons for the thinking mind in the creation these are they who remember God sitting and standing, they ponder and probe into the mysteries of nature and they say unto the Lord that thou art pure and thou not created these but with some purpose

Mention is made of sea voyages and of the great benefits that result therefrom At another place man's attention has been drawn to the study of zoology It deals with its various categories, their feelings their services In one place the Quran says there are lessons for you even in the quadrupeds pause and ponder how they give you milk from their own food and blood Ponder over the gifts of dates, grapes and other fruits you use them as eatables and make best wines from them, in all these there are signs and lessons for those individuals and nations that think At another place it is recorded that God has made a natural tendency in the bees that they should make their hives trees and roofs and store the juice that they have sucked from different flowers and fruits ponder and see for yourself what a sweeter and the health-giving juice (honey) it gives In all this there are signs for the thinking ones In one place it speaks of ants and refers to their sense of feeling, their activity and their preparation for a rainy day One ant goes round as does a commanding general and warns its fellow-creatures to keep themselves on the alert lest Sulaiman's army may march upon them unawares At another place we have the incident of a bird addressing Sulaiman it said that it had come from Saba with news from him of which the latter had no knowledge and it then related the news Whether these are facts or mere parables we do not prove or disprove but the fact remains that these provide us with

immense material to think about and infer results for our OWN good. What is meant by saying that the fauna and flora all make obeisance to the Lord is that they are all subject to the laws of Nature, which are immutable. When the Universe is so well organised how remarkable then must the Creator be he deserves all praise. From the above we learn that we have materials to help us both in the spiritual and temporal sphere in the wide book of Nature to take lessons from them is the task of men.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE MIRACLES OF THE QURAN

8

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Read the Quran carefully this is the only book that has remained intact from the time of its revelation to the present day. The Muslims have preserved it in their hearts millions of Hafiz know it by heart. Its purity has thus been maintained both by tongue and pen and this unique privilege no other book enjoys. In the Quran amongst other prophecies there is one also about the preservation of the book and as the other prophecies came true likewise the one relating to the Quran. For 1300 years we read about its purity in the Quran in most unequivocal terms which do not permit of false interpretation. It claims purity of text for all ages. It is no human task to make such claims for the future and that in such certain terms. The Quran asserts. Surely we revealed the Quran and surely we are its Preserver and Protector.

It is a strange phenomena that many an Arab and non Arab took a liking to the study of the Quran by heart almost at the same time and as a result thousands of Hafiz grew up. The Muslim children who know the Quran have a right to check even the erudite scholars

when they make a mistake The Quran is thus perfectly safe from the accretions of time and place and shall remain so it is for all climes and countries

What a strange claim and how marvellously it has been realised The Quran deals with the causes and philosophy of the rise and fall of nations, it deals at length with the principles of civilization, of politics and corporate life The learned and the illiterate, the philosophers and others have been benefited by it according to their own capacity, and shall continue to do so in future No one can take pride in their having exhausted the whole sea of wealth that the Quran offers The Quran deals with even the most complex problems it answers the subtle causes of the growth and decay of nations It tells you about the hidden treasures of earth, demands their exploration, exploitation and utilisation it draws your attention to the study of nature It speaks of men's immense potentialities and ordains their rightful use These are but living miracles of the Book

The more the world progresses the more human knowledge expands, the more the circle of inventions and discoveries enlarges, the more shall the miracle of the Quran shine forth And those who believe in revealed books will have to finally admit that of all the revealed books the Quran which stands the acid test of reason and experience stands head and shoulder above the rest The real need of the people is to study it dispassionately and with understanding and then adopt it as the only reasonable and workable plan of life this is the only perfect plan devised by the Creator for His creation Its teaching is a mine of knowledge, a fountain of truth and the very foundations of civilization The reason is that its source is that Being that has created all from nothing and knows the Alpha and the Omega of all The Quran asks Can the Creator be unaware (of the reality)?

After this, study the life of Prophet Muhammed ponder over his marked excellences and over their source It is a fact that he did not learn at the feet of any school teacher, not to talk of being educated in an

academy He was not brought up in any civilized, cultured or refined surroundings or society He never took lessons in political or social principles from any one All this was impossible for him because at that time neither was there any such healthy institution nor erudite person who could have tutored him in the incomparable teachings which he taught to the world. His teachings turned a new leaf in the history of the world The people who were but loosely connected groups of isolated tribes were united into a fraternity, which was soon to subdue the mighty potentates and become masters of unchartered regions

They who occupied high status for their ability bowed their head before the exalted teachings of this noble soul With all their boast they could not produce a single verse to the tune of the Quranic verse The stiff-necked and proud nation of the Arabs at last rallied round the banner of this orphan, apparently without friends or supporters Was all this the result of self-exertion only? God forbid, if Muhammed was not a Prophet or the Quran not the word of God, or if he had been tutored by some (as some hostile critics wilfully allege) would it have been possible for him to bring the whole nation to his knees? The nation that prided itself in its high-thinking and poetry and considered the whole world dumb before it, lay dumb before the eloquence, logic and sublimity of the Quran And their very acceptance turning them into a changed people is such a miracle that any thinking person, in demand to justice and reason would accept it without hesitation as the best code of life

As the Quran—the perfect code—is miracle as judged by its marvellous teachings, in the like manner its language is unique It is sweet of flow and sublime of thought The words though simple are brimful of significance The deeper you delve the wider it grows

Every diver gathers pearls according to his capacity. the deeper he goes the more he gets But one must learn to dive if he is anxious to gather jewels from the sea of knowledge and to this end he may do best by taking lessons from the Muslims of the early decades The source of the success of the early

Muslims was their right grasp of the true teachings of the Quran

The Quran says that if you doubt the Quran to be words of God then bring a sura to match with any sura from the Quran call your supporters to aid you in this if you are sincere. It further says bring even one single verse (to match with those of the Quran) and it proceeds saying that even if they do not accept this offer know that they are slaves of self, (obstinate) and that Truth is not their concern. Who else will be more misguided than they who worship their idols and have no heavenly proof for their beliefs! With all their opposition the Arabs were yet deeply attracted and fascinated by the magnetism of the Quran. Many of the worst opponents became Muslim by listening to the Quran. The history of Islam abounds in numerous examples that many enemies of the Prophet came to him with vengeance but after hearing a few verses from the Quran they became ardent devotees of the Prophet. Some staunch enemies refused to listen to the Quran for fear that they might be converted. This is yet a miracle of the Quran that the sweetness which is found in it is not found in any other Arabic writing, nay not even in the Hadis, nor in any translation of the Quran. A verse in the Quran says we have revealed this book as a blessing to you follow it and become temperate and good so that Mercy be on you. Even to-day the Quran has the same beauty, the same fascination. It is our duty to read it, understand it and enlighten the world with it.

QURAN AND CIVILIZATION.

9

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

All praises to the Lord and blessings to the Prophets! There are many people in this world who are ungrateful, consciously or otherwise.

The healthy forgets his sickness the rich his poverty, the tyrant his cruelty, the debtor his needs. Man is not merely ungrateful to those without whom he would not have been what he is but even neglects and discards them. It is with reference to this that in one place the Quran says, surely man is an ungrateful being. He often throws a veil on Truth. The most ungrateful is he who is ungrateful to his Creator, even for the use of the free gifts of Nature which man has used since time immemorial.

There are two ways of showing gratitude. First to have a sense of obligation and gratitude at heart and then express them not only by word of mouth but in one's actions. The first principle then is Faith and the second Action. It is necessary that we should follow the path laid out for us by God and not allow our petty thoughts to interfere in the same, for doing so would be like a patient giving preference to his own whims rather than following the doctors' suggestions and this is an act of ingratitude. He who is ungrateful to his Lord can be ungrateful in all his acts.

The prayers to the Lord, and the obedience to His laws make all phases of man shine with the light of truth and fidelity and makes of him an honest man who keeps his words, honours his pledge, is good of action and straightforward in all his dealings, in short he is made the emblem of goodness and the paragon of morality. This alone is the purpose of religion to which end all the Prophets exerted themselves. No one can deny this great blessing of religion.

From the beginning of the world religion has played a most significant role in the political and social growth of nations. It has largely influenced all aspects of their corporate life. The influence of religion on individuals was to have its effect on the communities and the nations. These influences in varied forms became part and parcel of the characteristics of the various nations and passed from one generation to another as hereditary qualities. Thus when civilization grew under the influence of religion it is an act of sheer ingratitude to say that no branch of civilization has anything to do with religion. Those who are enmeshed in the wrong notion

that religion and politics are incompatible concepts are grossly in the wrong. Even if they who prepare codes of law for the political and social well-being of nations are not educated in religion, yet they are certainly influenced by their hereditary qualities. Again, man is also greatly influenced by his surroundings. Even though he may not feel it yet he cannot evade its influence. In short whatever changes take place in this world they can be fundamentally traced back to religion. The difference lies in human tendencies and intelligence, wherein religion has sown the seed of reform. In some the seed grows in its actual form and brings forth good result. Others introduce reforms and changes into it. And some others who neither have the initiative nor the capacity of developing things are content with copying others.

Those in the first category are they to whom religion is basically sufficient for all requirements they agree to changes on minor details in consideration of the special circumstances of time and place. Those in the second group ignore the blessings, the benefits and favours of religion. They disconnect everything from religion. They believe that the human mind can devise healthy principles for corporate life without any aid of religion. Those in the third category follow religion and are simpletons but either because they do not have the capacity to participate in intellectual achievements or they do not do it, they do not as a result derive the full benefit of religion. The only good that comes out of this group is that the religious unity is not broken up, but the loss that results from it outweighs the little benefit derived. Pointing at those who belong to this section those who are opposed to religion trumpet the fact that if religion had any dealing with politics or corporate life then these would certainly participate in those affairs. Their very separation is an evident proof of the fact that religion has no connection with reason and with the activities guided by it. In the second place the minds of this group of religious people get rusty being unused to mental activity the mind becomes completely unable to understand any political or mental problem. In their corporate life they weaken their capacity to struggle in the race of existence. They defend religion but unfortunately do more harm than

good. Thus religion is separated from the sphere of civilization but the truth is that what religion has achieved through its spiritual power the great reformers failed to achieve in centuries and to the extent they succeeded they did so only in imitating the teachings of religion disguised under different names and forms.

The great blessing that Islam conferred upon the world is that it threw light on the various phases of civilization and proved to the world that religion alone is the true standard bearer of culture and civilization. Religion had become adulterated and its mirror had become so dim that humanity's full picture could not be seen there. The Quran came and gave the world the required mirror.

Man must lead the life in tune with the highest creation but this is impossible unless he has before him a workable plan. This workable plan is Quran. In the previous sermon enough light has been thrown on constructive and corporate life. The Quran made the first appeal to reason and ordained its employment. It encourages the study of Nature. It likens the ignorant to the quadrupeds. It even speaks of an organisation in the life of ants. Man who is the highest form of creation must lead a life higher than the animals. It speaks of kingdoms as gifts of God for those who follow the right path—in other words who deserve it, who are ready to put up a stern fight in the struggle for existence, whose hearts throb with feeling, with courage, with the spirit to serve and sacrifice. The Quran did not separate politics or any other branch of corporate life from religion. It declares Islam and civilization to be synonymous and urges the Muslims to be cultured and civilized.

EAST AND WEST

10

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammmad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

There is a verse in the Quran which says that both East and West is God's, wheresoever you may turn you will find the kingdom of God and the marks of His greatness. Whether we believe in the rotation of the earth or in the rising and setting of the sun in both the cases we find that the sun rises from the East and in every part of the earth at a certain time reaches the zenith and then it descends towards the West this the fall of the sun. At the place where the sun was spreading forth its health and life-giving rays now becomes enveloped in the darkness of deadly night. Everything seems dull, nay dead. Every part of the earth experiences the rising and the setting of the sun at some time or other in twenty-four hours. Again, the place where darkness had spread its veil is once more animated by the vivifying rays of the sun. This exchange of light and darkness, of life and death has been going on since time immemorial and shall go on till who knows when.

The Quran says that in the night there is lesson for the people how do we take away light from them and put them in darkness? This is the law made by the all-knowing God. At another place it is recorded that do you find any difference and irregularity in Nature's system. Look round and see if you can find any fault do it repeatedly and your eyes shall turn back in shame i.e., even the very idea of finding fault in Nature's system is insulting modesty.

This fact is even more clear than the sun itself that that part of the earth called East enjoys in history a superior place than West in culture and spiritual greatness. When the East was at the pinnacle of civilization the West was submerged in utter darkness savagery and barbarism were its distinctive features. The sun of civilization, whose movement spread over years and whose days and nights extend over decades, was then shining forth in the East in all its brilliance. At that time East was East in its real sense. The Prophets were born here, and it is from here that the seed of civilization blossomed forth. The East offered the cradle to Prophet Adam Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others whom the Easterners hail as Prophet. Muhammad, the last of all Prophets also shone forth from the Eastern horizon.

The rise of the Prophets and the reformers in the East bespeaks its thirst for guidance at the same time it bears testimony to the capacity of East and to its being more ready and ripe for reforms. No seed can germinate in a barren soil in such a soil the tree of reform cannot blossom and bring forth fruit. Islam revived the history and the ancient culture of the East and it introduced a civilization unparalleled in its nature. Islamic civilization answers both the spiritual and the physical needs of man. Its influence was not circumscribed to the East alone it united the East and the West, nay Islam and those nations that accepted its principle acted as the uniting link between the nations of the past and those of the future. In short, Islam and the Muslims during their palmy days were the sole torch-bearers of civilization and culture. The echo of their munificence was being sounded both in the East and the West. The West too bowed before it for light and learning. If the West has got spiritual guidance from Jesus, he too was an Easterner. Islam counts him as one of the illustrious prophets of the Israelites. A Hadis says that all Prophets are brothers, the principle of all is the same the difference lies in the means and the method. Every preceding Prophet foretold the coming of his successor and prepared the ground for him. Their purpose was not to divide humanity into groups and parties. It is because of this that Islam ordains respect for all the Prophets and demands belief in the Prophethood of all those whose Prophethood is proved by the Quran. No one can be a Muslim, in the true sense of the term, unless one has faith in all the Prophets.

The Dusk of the East—

Once in every twenty-four hours every part of the earth experiences light and darkness. In the like manner the sun of fortune offers (in centuries) the same experience to nations. It rose from the Eastern horizon and shed its brilliant lustre for thousands of years. Then gradually it began to descend towards the West. Where there was day now night began to set in and where there was night, day appeared. The Quran says we interchange the days (of fortune) among the peoples and nations. To-day the world is

surprised at the wonders of the West. The East that prided in its being the East and gloried in its tutorship of the West is now aident to see things in Western lights, through Western spectacles and by Western eyes as if after the dawn of the sun of fortune in the West a veil has been put over all its weaknesses and defects. Every sin of their's has begun to be reckoned as an art.

In fact it is mere idealism to call one part of the earth East and the other West. Every part of the earth is both East and West. When the sun rises there it is called East and when it crosses the semi-circle and disappears in the Western horizon the same place is termed West.

According to modern investigations our earth is bent towards the East as if West is every moment anxious to become East. Even in these advanced days of investigations and researches the world stands divided on the basis of certain traits and characteristics. Right or wrong it has come into vogue.

The Dawn of the East —

Taking the above into consideration it is not wrong to say that as once in every twenty-four hours every part of the West bows to the East in the like manner the sun of fortune has travelled the whole of the Western hemisphere and has almost reached the Eastern horizon. In the West the signs of decay are becoming evident. The day is followed by night and the night by day. The dark clouds in the Eastern sky are getting cleared. The plan of the West was prepared on the basis of Islamic culture. Now all those scattered gems have been gathered by the East. The East is now busy preparing its working-plan on the basis of these gathered gems and on its past experience and this will prove superior to that of the West in all respects, for History is a great teacher. The proud working-plan of the East is religion and ethics. And now when to it will be added the working-plan of the West it will multiply its usefulness. The West will have to have its head before the East for it is the law of Nature that the former should bow before the latter.

HUMAN EXCELLENCE.

11

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

Allah is One, incomparable Divine and Muhammad the ideal among men. In their respective ages the Prophets were models of perfection. Their excellences are yet surviving, nay, because of their services and sacrifices, they have won a high place in the Divine eyes. Prophet Muhammad, though he came as the last of all Prophets, yet in virtue and excellence, he surpassed his predecessors, and as such occupies the highest place in Divine scrutiny. Hence, without following in his footsteps no one can attain perfection. It is by following his footprints according to one's own capacity that one can attain the highest height. Prophethood has seen its completion and all those who would mould themselves after the model of the last Prophet would get closer and nearer to him.

The first requirement of Faith is such a complete belief in the Promise of God that one's actions should bear testimony to it. Flaws in action betray lack of faith. Prayer is a sublime form of action and true prayer is belief in the Unity of God and submission to the Divine Wisdom. Whatever the command be it must direct one towards the edification of soul or towards better relations among fellow-men. It must be made explicitly known that God does not stand in need of our prayers and praises. Our good actions tend only to perfect us. As a barren land is reclaimed through manures and fertilisers in like manner, the Prophets of sundry climes reclaimed the human mind by offering themselves as moulds for the people to cast themselves in. Humanity can never ignore the benefits conferred upon it by the Prophets who taught man to distinguish between good and bad, truth and falsehood.

Those who believe in the existence and attributes of God and in His Promise and in the resurrection are of the Faithful. Those who obey the commandments of God and avoid that which is forbidden are the Righteous ones. They are even hailed as 'Wali' and 'Wali' means a friend, a loved one. God speaks of Himself and of Prophet Muhammed as the 'Wali' of the Faithful. He loves the Faithful ones and there is reciprocal friendship. No one can become a friend of the Lord unless he adopts the means required thereof i.e., chooses to do things liked by the Lord. The Quran and the Hadis abound in things the Lord likes. And these things are not of the category of 'beliefs' but action. The Prophet himself acted upon those and so did his disciples and so also the righteous ones of all times. Some of them are easy whereas others are difficult. The test of strong faith is the renunciation of the heart, the spirit of sacrifice for Truth and of running the risk of life and riches in defence of the Right. He in whom these are found, is the best among the Faithful. And he who takes himself for the servant of the people and even bears loss for the good of others is the greatest among men. There are those who suffer for others and there are others who don't vie with others even in doing good and are indifferent about others. Their own selves are then chief concern even though they may do some good to others while achieving their own ends. And when it comes to comparing the good, between the two they give preference to their own selves. Those belonging to this category are of the ordinary type. There is the third type also who hardly deserves the appellation 'Man'. In this class are those who for their little good dare not hesitate to hurt and harm others. They are a danger to the person and property of others, and whether they are crude or civilized makes no difference. If through legal or theological conjuring one aims at usurping the rights it is gross injustice to call him a Muslim. A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue men are safe, a vile critic can in no way be a Muslim. The Quran says that whosoever unjustly accuses the Faithful is doing an open sin and is blamable. The Hadis says Beware, don't distrust, don't carp and cavil, don't try to probe into the secret of others, keep safe from all evil. Muslims are brothers. A Muslim is ordained to avoid cruelty and despising others. To sneer at a brother Muslim is to insult one's Islam. A

Muslim is commanded to safeguard and protect the things of his brother as his own and is forbidden to inflict injury on the person, prestige and property of the other.

According to one Hadis a Muslim must not keep aloof from ill feeling from his brother Muslim for more than three days at a maximum. He must meet him and even take the lead in greeting the other. If the other replies both are blessed and if he doesn't the sin lies with him.

One Hadis records that the back-biters shall not enter Paradise. According to another Hadis Allah says that he who insults My friend wages war against Me. On another occasion the Prophet said that he who exposes the weaknesses of others gets his own weaknesses exposed by God. It is further recorded in the Hadis that whosoever relieves a Muslim of his troubles God relieves him of his troubles and he who covers the faults of his brethren God veils his faults both here and in the hereafter.

According to one Hadis if a Muslim peeps into the house of another person and if the owner of the house gouges out his eyes he is not to be blamed. At another place the Hadis says if a person is an eaves-dropper, warm lead will be poured into his ears on the Day of Judgment.

One Hadis says that God blesses them that are kind. It says Be kind to the people on earth, and Allah shall be kind to you in Heaven.

THE CAUSES OF DECAY THE REMEDY

12

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Immortality is exclusively Allah's all others are mortals. The evolutions and revolutions that we

see around us point to the fact that the creation is not eternal. Rise and fall, health and sickness, joys and sorrows, life and death are all a series of revolutions and accidents due to various causes to define their limits is impossible. Man, however learned and advanced may be, has his own limits and it is because of this so often man fails to achieve what he thinks he can. Nature has not revealed to man his exact limitations so that he might keep on attempting for higher ends and so long the world exists man shall continue to play his part in the organisation of this wide-universe.

Nations have been subjected to rise and decline from time immemorial. Even though we have no authentic account of the pre-historic times yet there are instances innumerable to show where the nations have been oscillating between these two extremes. The Quran abounds with examples of many ancient nations. It draws our attention to the cause of their growth and decay. It speaks of adventures and asks us to ponder over the manifestations of God and also over the legacy of nations of yore and to adopt a workable plan for ourselves. Islam has conferred a great blessing on the research scholars by making references to the causes of the rise and fall of nations.

As the human civilization grew up by stage so also the human intelligence so that it now not only ponders over the cause and effects of incidents but also understands them.

The teachings of pre-Islamic religions have been 'blind following and unquestioned obedience to authority'. To use reason was a sin. The acts of God were regarded as independent of law and unrelated to causes to indulge in such discussions was regarded as an insult to the greatness of the Lord. In a previous sermon, I have shown that the greatness of the Lord demands that everything in the world is systematic and bound up by a law and that the world is a well regulated organisation. The decay or growth of any one factor is due to its observance or non observance of these laws. Islam declared the work of God to be systematic and it makes this the very basis of the

greatness of the Lord. Many people have misinterpreted the meaning of "what God wills He does" as implying the actions of God to be totally unrelated to any cause. This has created much misunderstanding in religion. The existence of God began to be attacked as futile and He has been attributed with cruelty at certain times and with weakness at others.

When Islam made a nation in whose veins ran the blood of Abraham the masters of the destiny of the world and before whom now lay the wealth of Caesars and Khushoes it reacted adversely on those religious leaders who had regarded their religion as the only true one and themselves the true inheritors of the kingdoms of the Heavens and of the earth. They were indignant as to how an unknown and (according to them) misguided people, were made victorious over the chosen ones. There was a lull in all religious gatherings. Minds that were not used to reason were at a loss to understand the growth and rise of the Muslim.

They began to revile the faith and the founder of Islam itself. But the brilliance of the radiant lustre of the personality of the Prophet dispelled all darkness. A wave set in among the members of this motionless mass of the so-called religious people. Among them grew up rationalists who began to question authority and laid bare the threads of dogmatism. The result was the Renaissance and the Reformation. People became enriched by the use of reason and true knowledge. The ban on reason was removed and people began to breathe in the light of reason. Blind following became a dead thing. Those who regarded themselves as the key-holders to Heaven and Hell had their veil totally rent asunder and the actualities exposed in all their barrenness. It now became clear that God is neither cruel nor weak but acts on a definite basis. Any individual or nation—seemingly Muslim or non-Muslim or apparently Faithful or Unfaithful—gets the reward of its actions on the right lines according to its own ability and capacity. If it neglects, it bears the brunt right now and here.

There are many divisions of our life and each one has its own organisation under which it grows and develops. Unless all the portions are worked pro-

perly the success of the whole is well nigh impossible. If any part is injured it has its reaction on the other parts. The germs of a contagious disease spread from one part to another and from one disease to another. The same is true of mental and social diseases. It weakens the religious and social solidarity. The nation which has not the control of its own education, the nation which is devoid of arts and industries and wealth and is destitute of pelt and power, the nation whose heart is empty of large-heartedness and the spirit of sacrifice, the nation which is wont to worshipping wealth is fond of luxury and is bereft of all national sympathies can never rise can never occupy an honourable position in the comity of nations. Such a nation can be of no service to religion, all its energies, mental or physical, petering out in wrong channels bear supersedes all their vigour and strength. All those nations that do not utilise the gifts of nature and do not rightly use them must prepare themselves for the certain fate of being doomed. God never helps those nations that do not help themselves. When Spring comes every branch, nay every leaf is green and full of vigour in the like manner every living community is strong and vigorous.

In short, the world is subjected to a 'shariat' or a system. Its neglect shatters the nations to smithereens. Those who think the rise of nations to be accidental, and think members of their own faith or community to be on the right and thus hope to rise and further believing their opponents to be on the wrong desire their decay are indeed grossly in the wrong. They become biased and prejudiced, and sticking to the letter, they lose the spirit and wander astray from the right path. They believe that of all the religions theirs is the best therefore God would help them. And even when they fall a victim to bad days, they fondly console themselves saying that God has promised reward in Heaven for the righteous ones and the ephemeral joys of the world do not count for much. After all, they say, our opponents will go to Hades. Let them enjoy for a time here. From this very belief it is clear that he—Faithful or the Infidel—who strives and struggles gets the reward of his labour, and he who does not strive does not achieve anything. Hence it is the duty of everyone to try and attempt.

Where did God say that the Faithful should be idle and sluggish and dependent on others. He ordains us to acquire all the possible powers so that we are not disgraced before others. To neglect the factors that go to make life and on which depends the national organisation is not only to disgrace the nation but to injure the safety of religion as well. It has its reaction on the hereafter as well. It is because of this that Islam firstly demands organisation and we are made responsible for the decay of any phase of life for, does not the Quran say all the evils that befall you are the result of your own doing?

THE SECRET OF A NATION'S PROGRESS LIES IN ITS HISTORY

13

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muham-mad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

He, the all praise-worthy, created factors that results in a nation's growth or decay. Blessed are they who have kind hearts and who utilise their mental powers for devising means for the betterment of humanity

The nations that were at one time at the height of power never thought of decay and fall. It is the law of God that when a nation reaches the zenith of power and not only surpasses its contemporaries in its extension of life but takes to reducing other nations to slavery its mind gets swelled with power. It begins to think of itself at the highest height and this marks the end of their progress. Their activity turns into sluggishness. Luxury becomes the be all and end all of their life. All their practicability gets lost and their reason dull. After keeping awake for a long time a man gets fast asleep, so do the nations too,

In contrast to the above those nations that have been reduced to great straits, looking to the nations that are in power, crave for freedom. And if their past had been also bright they are moved to action to make their future equally glorious. To add to this if the governing class is harsh and repressive the oppressed nations are filled with added zeal and fervour. On the one hand we have the ruling nation intoxicated with power, adored in luxury, ignorant and despising and on the other hand we have the subject nations awaking, arising and pondering over their history filled with enthusiasm for avenging and reclaiming the past honours. These are the causes for the rise and fall of nations.

The progress of the European nations today is due to their spirit of competition and rivalry. Every nation vies with the other. The growth and decay of all nations is influenced by this law. As there are many stages in a man's life so also the nations pass from one to another. When a nation gets disgraced with its present miserable lot and is anxious to revive its past it implies that it has awakened whatever the causes be it shall be fully avenged one day and regain its lost glory. True, the secret of a nation's progress lies in its acquaintance with its own history and culture. A nation that is ignorant of its own history cannot have a very high ideal. In it the spirit of revival would be comparatively less. Its soul would be unacquainted with the true conception of glory and greatness. It would remain content with subjection and would feel at peace with all the wealth and honour they can acquire in that state.

Acquaintance with one's own history and civilization creates in the children of the soil that spirit of self-respect, national honour, the love of liberty and all the other necessary qualities for national progress. There is no better remedy for a subject nation than that by mutual co-operation and help and by uniting personal differences to form a united front of education unconcerned with the ruling class. Even if the nation spends all its wealth in acquainting its children with its own history and civilization the bargain is yet cheap. It would transform them into a living community. Mutual good feeling is at the root of national life. This feeling cannot be created unless the nation is

conscious of its own honour and this in turn rests on its acquaintance with its own history and civilization. Without a united programme of education whose goal is to arouse national consciousness the nation cannot realise the full benefit from its history and civilization.

An acquaintance with the arts and sciences is necessary in the struggle for existence in the like manner national prestige a high ideal and regard for its own history and culture is essential to imbibe true spirit and enthusiasm in people to attain to the pinnacle of greatness. Hardly any ruling nation in the world preserves the language history and culture of the subject nation this is more true of the nations who believe in narrow nationalism. They always try to maintain superiority complex.

Islam that came to do away with all racial and national distinctions aims to unite the people in Unity and in Islamic fraternity. In its tolerance and broad-based teachings it established a world-wide brotherhood where no distinction is made between the black and the white, the Lord and the slave, the Arab and the non-Arab but that all stand shoulder to shoulder. Islam broke all barriers and established a new nationalism in which all the nations have equal status and are struggling towards the same ideal. Different nations taking advantage of this toleration joined the fold of Islam. Though difficult as it is, these nations varying in culture and civilization, in modes and manners and differing in customs and politics welded together in Unity and dyed in true Islamic colours.

To what heights the Arabs reached after drinking deep at the fountain of Islamic Unity is too evident to need repetition. This is the great miracle of Islam that it united the different nations thereby strengthening the bonds of human relations by setting a wave of fraternal feeling among them. Even those nations that rose like torrents to sweep away Islam were themselves swept off and despite their victory they entered the fold of Islam. They conquered the land, but Islam conquered their hearts and they became Muslims not merely in name but worthy Muslims. It is grossly wrong to attribute to Islam the division,

disorganisation, educational and political backwardness evident in the Mussalmans to day. The Muslims are spread over many nations and are weighed down by those national customs and habits. So long those national distinctions are not swept away by true Islamic teachings they can neither truly progress nor can be rightly termed one nation.

THE RISE OF THE MUSLIMS.

14

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Even though there is similarity in the cause of the rise and fall of nations yet there are some factors peculiar to the Muslims. It is an undeniable truth that Islam grew and blossomed among the Arabs, that it was from this part of the earth that the sun of Islam shed its radiant lustre. Despite their many weaknesses there was something in these disorganised Arabs that they were chosen as teachers of Truth and leaders of Man. At the advent of Islam nearly all the causes that go for national decay were evident among the Arabs. Nonetheless in them were present the primary requirements of real life, viz. self-confidence, self-respect, courage and to top these the ardent and irrepressible love of liberty. Frankness was then marked characteristic. They had the determination to sacrifice their lives in defence of their principles. These are the necessary traits that go towards the making of a strong nation without these no nation can ever rise. The beauty of any trait is its moderation and its right working. But if they are over-worked or misused the results are fatal. A spark that may be able to raze the whole earth to ashes can be regulated, nay fully brought under man's control because it belongs to the category of creative things. In contrast to this it is impossible to produce heat from a heap of cold ashes or from a mass that has not the capacity to produce heat. The traits of the Arabs with which was to be

built the edifice of their nation had crossed the bounds their excess of bravery had turned to be foolhardiness which had involved the nation into perpetual conflict. The whole nation was rent a sunder by parties and factions, each cutting the other's throat. In the torrents of this great catastrophe millions upon many a nation has been swept away in the sands of Arabia it had created but a swamp.

History bears witness to the fact that this nation had the great capacity to grow, but all their energies were diverted in the wrong channels. Islam turned their discord and division into concord and unity, focussed all their attention to one Qibla, filled their hearts with the love and the greatness of one God and freed their mind from the fetters of worship of any material things. It gave them not an idol but an ideal, abstract but not human comprehension. It increased the heights of human thought—made them soar higher than ever before—it widened the circle of human comprehension it offered unlimited growth to human mind where previously, the people's head and heart, their vision and comprehension were marked by narrow limitations and was lost in the worship of the unreal and of material things. Now their hearts surged through and through with the love of one great God before which the greatest of powers or ideal seemed too limited and too low to them. Truth was supreme this was their only concern.

The nation that was profusely gifted with the spirit of sacrifice began now to think of Life in terms of sacrifices at the altar of Truth. In defence of Islam and to its glory they sacrificed most liberally their person and property such sacrifice became their delight. Death became a coveted thing for them they sought it with delight and anxiety. But what an irony! death thinned them that sought it and wealth came to them in abundance who sacrificed it most liberally. Indeed the key to a nation's greatness is its spirit of sacrifice and large-heartedness. To-day too only those nations, are at the pinnacle of greatness, who sacrifice their person and property with profuseness in defence of their nation by liberally spending in the cause of education, industry, commerce, researches and so forth.

Islam gave the Arabs a remarkably high ideal and every Muslim is expected to abide by it. Whatever good we do we must not feel that we return here—our actions must be selfless, the only motive being personal motives. One must make one's return as pure then ever the whole world in return may not suffice to balance it. Indeed, there is nothing in the world that can be returned for the labour of love. The soul is something high and supreme and to have some material ideal would be nothing short of insulting the soul. All the joys and comforts of the world are but the scattered crumbs on its path. They give no meaning to a traveller who looks beyond this life to Divinity in the celestial heights. To give an analogy, the worldly comforts and greatness are as even the by-things acquired in the way by a traveller, but the end is different. To be lost in the things acquired on the way and to forget the real goal is a misfortune, a calamity. For this I do not for a moment entertain the idea that we are concerned in getting the requirements of our life here but what I want to bring home is that we must not be slaves of the worldly things but be their Lord and master. It was this ideal that infused in the souls of Arabia such celestial illumination that dimmed the lights of Rome and Persia both of which were at that time deeply engrossed in worldly pleasures and obsessed with worldly powers. Both had forgotten the teachings of their respective religions and had reduced them to mere life. The world then evinced a deep people had lost even the primary requirements of life.

God chose a people, apparently poor and weak though gifted with large-heartedness and integrity to serve Islam nay to serve culture and civilization, in short to serve the best interests of humanity. Within the course of a century they spread over half the world as the torch bearers of light and learning, culture and civilization wherever they went they taught the people philosophy, mathematics and medicine. It were they who irrigated the European mind with the taste of pure knowledge.

If we look to the progress of other great faiths we find that they all grew by slow degrees. There were difficulties in their way which were solved through the

intervention of some mighty Emperor who became their patron-saint. Christianity had its Constantine, Buddhism its Asoka and Zoroastrianism its Kaikhusro but for Islam we have a different story. Its missionaries were people belonging to tribes that had no worldly recognition nor had they the support of any mighty potentate. All the clouds were cleared by the fervour of their faith, they faced all odds without any external aid and added such a glorious chapter in the annals of the world which is peculiar only to Islam.

This is an epitomized picture of the rise of Islam. Even to-day the Truth of Islam without any material aid, is fascinating noble souls to it. The great rapidity with which Islam is spreading to-day in the East and in the West is an evident proof of the fact that Islam is a natural religion. Its teachings are simple, free from all ambiguities. If we appeal to our reasoning powers and are candid in our judgment there would not be any difficulty in accepting it. The present status of Muslims does not permit them to have similar organisation for missionary work as those of other faiths more about this later. But it must be recalled that we Muslims had no such missionary-bureaucracy even in the early decades. Despite this handicap Islam spread with the rapidity of lightning and if this is not its miracle what else is it? And in the face of all this, in the way that this wonderful miracle has been wrought, in the manner in which Islam spread all over the world—unaided by material factors, unsupported by patronage,—to make the charge of “propaganda by the sword”—is, nothing short of rank blasphemy.

ISLAM AND NATIONALISM.

15

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

The Quran says in very explicit terms that humanity is but one umm. The farther they go off from

the centre the wider the divergence that arises among them Every life grows out of infinitesimal specks which are nearer to non-existence than life A thing exists before it is felt by our physical senses Before every motion and between two motions there is a pause Life is a (series of) motions and death a pause (eternal) Before and after life pause and rest are essential Life is a uniting link between two spheres of non-existence it acts as a bridge between the two Everything begins from a microscopic stage and the starting point is always a unit This unity changes into diversity with the roll of years and diversity without difference is impossible, nay it is difference alone that is diversity But if one ideal is put before these diverse groups they would unite on a common basis Despite the divergence of paths if the goal is the same then all will centre round one point And this point is Islam which demolishes all barriers, national and racial at the very acceptance of Tawheed (Unity of God) Tawheed means to unite What you seem river is really a drop and the desert but a particle (of sand) They started in unity and even to-day by their co-operation they still form units and you call them rivers and deserts and not drops and particles

Again take the apple of your eyes The rays of light seem to centre round the apple of the eye and seem to spread Eastward and Westward It focuses all its rays to the object it desires to see By this I do not for a moment propose to talk on the different aspects of light but to show that eye, the very centre of sight, is such an example of a unit as can be easily perceived by any Though the centre of sight is the apple of the eye yet unless the rays spread both nothing is seen Similarly if the rays do not surround that body it cannot be perceived ie after diversity they again join in unity It is because of this that both shortsight and long-sight are reckoned as eye diseases What is true of the rays of vision is also true of the rays of the Sun Their centre is the sun and they are closest at the centre the farther they go from that point the farther they spread forth and seem divided

Diversity is essential yet to focus the attention of the divergent grounds, above their racial and national

considerations, the supreme ideal was possible through the teachings of Islam alone. Islam offers the nations such a noble ideal that despite their differences they unite in this that they have the same goal. The goal is that they should attain the highest human excellence and to attain this each nation should follow such a system as resembles others in principle to top these they should all converge upon a central point.

The human mind is much influenced by its surroundings, especially the nearest ones. It does not matter whether the surrounding is wholesome or not.

Man in the beginning was nearer unity. From individuals families grew up and from families communities and nations. The more they enlarged the wider grew their differences. Besides this natural reason for the divergence another important reason is that different talents and abilities were required for the constructive scheme of human growth. People with fertile brains and with inventive genius were required to increase the stature of human civilization. People began to take to novelty and specialise in different branches of civilization. If man had not been gifted with immense potentialities and given a much freer range than the lower animals the very purpose of human creation would have been defeated.

The Quran says if God wished He would have made the people one group only. It uses the word group for the various category of birds also, the purpose being to preserve the uniformity of thought and feeling found in the flocks and the animals. Again it says that their differences shall remain for ever they would never be totally annihilated. The very purpose of human creation is that they should take initiative and be novel so that there may be distinction between human excellence in this that one has some purpose in view and is determined of resolution, that he distinguishes between good and bad and strives to reach the pinnacle of success, that he is docile and utilises education and culture to aid him in his attempt to reach the goal. Man is not acquainted even with his actual limitations so that he might keep on attempting for higher ends till the end of time. Man utilises his past experiences and knowledge to aid him in his

constructive work. It is because of these inherent capacities that man is made the Lord of the creation. All human progress rests on human knowledge and its past experiences. In this end contributions have been made by generation of varied peoples.

The distinctive feature of man is his power of thinking and reasoning and gems of thought have been produced by these alone. Since the mental powers of all are not the same difference is inevitable. Man, imperfect as he is liable to make errors. But it is foolish not to use reason for the fear of having a different opinion from others or for the fear of making mistakes. Every shield has two sides to it. Everything that exists in this world has both virtue and vice, it is a compound of good and bad. The thorn accompanies the rose. Sorrow and joy go hand in hand, life has its counterpart death and success its failure. The presence of fire and water is a blessing to mankind but at times they bring in their train woeful misery. Much depends how a thing is used. Anything to prove beneficial ought to be rightly directed, used properly and in moderation. Much depends on the primary object of any existence. It is because of this that the 'Shariat' lays down that actions shall be judged by motives. It also excuses unconscious mistakes. Any difference of opinion based on right reason, true conviction and honest belief is worthy of all respect. But if the difference is based on prejudice and ignorance or mere obedience to convention it degrades man to the region of lower animals. The Quran condemns this sort of difference most unsparingly. It says only they are secure from such difference upon whom is God's preferential mercy (those are they who utilise their reason to reach the zenith of human achievement. They alone are perfect men).

It is clear by now that in the beginning of time there was unity. It was natural and not man-made or artificial. Human civilization was then in its infancy. The differences which grew up later were also natural and necessary. To give a limit to these differences and to unite voluntarily is the crowning glory of human achievement. Hence man as he progresses in civilization must try to minimise the racial and national differences and must never forget the point so vividly

brought out by the Quran which says O' people we created you as a unit and distributed you among tribes and communities so that you may know each other. He alone is best who is good (in his dealings and in his relations with others). A Hadis records that we give a non-Arab preference over an Arab, and a slave over a master because of his good qualities.

ISLAM—THE RELIGION OF PEACE

16

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Islam is absolute fidelity to God and complete submission to His will. The root of this word is 'Salam' which means Peace. The sign of a true Muslim is that no Muslim is hurt by his hand and tongue. Muslims when they meet each other say 'Assalam-o-alkum'. It means that Peace be with you or that you be safe and free from danger and trouble. The Holy Quran says O Ye Faithful become faithful servants of the Lord, be Muslims by accepting the message of Peace and Harmony. Prophet Muhammad in his letter to the Caesar of Rome offered the same message. He said "I give you the message of Islam. accept the invitation and enter the fold of Peace." All the Prophets that came to this world came to preach 'Tawheed' (the Unity of God) and to guide the people on His path and this is Islam. Thus Islam was the religion of all the Prophets and all of them were Muslims. But their followers often made unnecessary accretions and gave different names to their varying beliefs and convictions after the name of their leaders and elders. The gulf of difference kept widening with the roll of years and a grave spectacle of division began to be evident in the religion of Allah.

The Quran says O' Prophets eat those which are pure and 'halal' i.e. those got in the best manner and are clean. do good. I see your actions and am aware

of them. By expressions like these the Quran urges us not to indulge in acts of show and publicity but to act selflessly without inner motives. At another place it says that your various groups are in reality one group. I am your Lord. Obey my commandments. Here again it hints that our acts must be based on purity and selflessness and proceeds saying, Do not do anything out of fear of the people, to fear man's kind is foolish. Your hearts must be free from all fear except Mine. The same message was broadcasted to their receptive followers by the Prophets of all ages. The verse following the above says but these followers divided themselves in sections and began wrangling obsessed with their own convictions, their own self became their only concern. At another place the Quran says O' Prophets you are not accountable for the division people introduced in the religion of God, i.e. the Prophets are not responsible for this act but the people themselves who created the division, they would be answerable to God, there they will be shown that their actions were in no way helpful to the cause of religion but unhealthy and destructive. In one place it says don't be like those who remain stray even after open truth from God and create factions and parties. Again it says don't be like those who have paired their religion and are themselves divided. There is a verse in the Quran which the Prophet quoted while inviting the people of the Book to Islam. It runs, Say, O' people of the Book come, let us unite on principle common between us and that is that we worship none but God, giving no one the glory that is His making, no one His partner and elevating none to the plane of deity, let no creature worship another, may that worship be of any kind. And if the people of the Book pay no heed to this tell them 'Listen and bear witness that we are Muslims'. In the above verse the doctrine of Islam has been detailed, one who believes therein is a Muslim. From the above it is also clear that in truth this was also the belief of the people of the Book. The gist of the above is that when you were originally one, your creator the same and the same your goal and that you all started from the same point and the same is the destination, then what sense is there to wrangle among yourselves by creating religious differences.

Prophet Muhammed presented the teachings of Islam in such clear terms as stand above all doubts. He declared in the words of the Quran: Say we believe in God, His angles, His books, and His Prophets. Thus the Quran which is the sum and substance of the teachings of all the religions did not come to create any division. It revealed the accretions of time and place and restored religion to its pristine purity. It came to offer the common meeting ground for all religions and as such, the term 'Islam' fittingly applies to it. The Quran contains the teachings of all religions and while reading it there remains no need to read any other book. It is a different thing that you study other religions. It is a different thing that you study them to add to your general information.

The teaching of Islam in short, is that religion is neither a matter of birth nor race or nationality. It is the other name for honesty, veracity and truth. It is the duty of every one to acquire truth wherever found. This message of Islam did not please them who glorified their descent, tribe, race and nationality, and those who were wont to ancestral worship, they believed that they were the chosen ones and none but they shall enter Paradise. It was left to the Quran to cut the Gordian knot. It declared that he alone is best in the eyes of the Lord who is best in his actions. Ancestry without action is useless. Even the greatest of men will have to bear the brunt of their actions. Their greatness shall not avail these. God is above party-feelings. He is impartial. To label one a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim does not bring one any near salvation. Salvation depends on strength of faith and good actions. Just to count one's self in a particular religion and to regard one's self as belonging to the chosen group and as such claiming salvation, lay denying it to all the others, gives religion a hereditary shape. Quran destroyed this wrong notion and in doing this it had to face great odds. It created a group and named it Muslim. Blessed are they who are worthy of this appellation.

THE MONTH OF RAMZAN

17

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

A cursory glance over the affairs of the world would speak of the annual celebration of the Revelation of the Quran in this month. Muslims all the world over drink at this fountain as a matter of course but more so especially during this month they imbibe fresh vigour every time they read it. Ask its readers and you will find that one never gets tired of reading it, nay they add by it to their energy and enthusiasm in it they find a solace Divine. This scripture was revealed in the month of Ramazan and as such the whole month is a period of Eid or Joy for the Muslim World. It weans us from our earthly indulgences and transports us to Divine realms

The greatness of one lies not in his form but in the metal of which he is made. I mean the inner self. It is not the flesh but the spirit that counts. The physical is but a means towards the end and the end is spiritual. But it is the body wherein the soul develops, much depends on the course of action one adopts. On the sea of life one must bravely buffet against the waves of physical temptations one must supersede the low cravings and make the spirit triumph over the flesh. This achievement is the crowning glory of man's existence at which even the angels stand stunned. Man is made the Lord of the Creation but when one misses the ideal of life, falls a prey to earthly attractions and becomes a slave rather than a master of the creation, the soul gets enmeshed in wordly frailties. The Quran says that verily, in the name of the olive, the fig and the 'Sina (referred to for their uses and historical bearing) we have made man of the best make and despite this one falls a victim to depravity save the believing ones who do good. In short, they who subject their flesh to their spirit not only avoid any hindrance but actually gain assistance

from the very factor that would have hindered growth. In the human self there are potentialities which if rightly developed would re-kindle the whole world with its light and itself soar to the highest height imaginable. When an enlightened soul can give light to others of its own brilliance one can at best imagine its height. But to attain this stage is not easy, nonetheless it is not impossible. The question arises as to how can man supersede the material cravings, be a master over them and reach the Divine precincts. Glance and ponder over the prayers and the mode of worship of various faiths and among the Muslims you will find an uniformity, a unity peculiar only to Islam. You will find moderation a marked feature in it. Islam avoids extremes and provides for both material and spiritual progress. The life of the Prophet is a model for all. It does not teach us to be a recluse, but ordains us to lead an independent and honourable life in this world of stern realities.

The month of Ramzan has begun. This is a period of spiritual exercise. It is for both physical and spiritual improvement. The recitation of the Quran is a spiritual diet. It awakens the dormant constituents and draws us nearer to the goal. The goal is far, yet near. It teaches us to bear the pangs of hunger and thirst so as to realise the straits in which our poor brethren are. Again, we are asked to spend of our bounty liberally. O 'Ye rich,' remember mere prayers and fasts shall not bring you salvation. This even the poor can do, even the ladies can beat you in this. God has given you vantage over others. He has given you wealth and riches. You are to do things which cannot be done by the poor and that is to pay your 'Zakat' help the poor, the needy, the orphan, the widow, the wayfarer. Give education to the children of the poor, help schools and other places of learning and make your community a living community. You are the pilots who are to guide the ship of the community to the haven of safety. This month of Ramzan is a month of good deeds, take accounts of yourselves, make up your deficits, give the due that you owe to God and the people. Without this salvation is impossible. God does not forgive you your duties to your fellows. Whatever you do, do for Islam, do for the good of the Muslims. Forget individual and

communal tensions, end religious feuds and be brothers upto one other Unless you do this Ramzan does not stand any surety for your salvation Promise fidelity to God and prepare for entering Paradise

WAS ISLAM SPREAD BY SWORD ?

18

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

Brethren in Islam! The critics of Islam in their sundry attacks charge Islam with having been spread by the sword Their object in so doing is to prove that the corner stone of Islam is force and violence and that if it had any inherent good violence would not have been employed and Jihad (crusade) not sanctioned Jihad has been translated in other languages as meaning religious war In to-day's sermon I shall deal with the meaning of the word Jihad and then its detail and finally over the agreements and treaties the Musslman entered into and the toleration they showed in their palmy days and this in itself gives a deathblow to the false accusation that Islam was spread by the sword In this regard the Quran itself is the best guide Again we have historical evidence recorded by unbiased and impartial historians The real meaning of the word Jihad is to try, to attempt, to make an effort and also the survival of the fittest No being, no community, no nation, nay no idea can last if the dictum of survival of the fittest is ignored The instinct of self-preservation is inherent in every being and the safest manner of protection is to strengthen one's ownself and not be dependent on the mercy of others Cruelty is indeed wicked and no one preaches one to be cruel nonetheless to secure one's self against the cruelty of others one needs to strengthen his position If you do not do so you cannot escape being a victim yourself Then no one shall hear your cries for you alone are responsi-

ble to bring yourself to such straits and invited others to prey upon you. This is your unpardonable sin for which you have to undergo hardship and suffering. Thus man's existence is wholly jihad. Even to-day the most civilized nations achieved little at the Disarmament Conference. Their spirit of rivalry has once again gathered war clouds as if the unprecedented disasters of the last Great War were not sufficient. The last war had destroyed men, women and children, fields and factories, it had brought nothing but misery and suffering in its train. With all our pretence of civilization we are only refining the means of butchery. Why is not war outlawed? Why has the angel of Peace disappeared? Why are they who are the destinyholders of nations busy preparing for war as if they are thirsty after human blood. If you want to apply any proper name to the modern war, the best that we can term it is war on humanity and on civilization. Humanity, civilization, morality and religion are nothing very different. If they who justify war in the name of humanity, in the name of culture and civilization cannot very well condemn war in the name of religion, their logic deserves our sympathies.

Anything when it crosses its limits becomes damnable. True it is that as to-day cruelty is done by the civilized world in the name of humanity and civilization so also some religious fanatics committed cruelty in the name of religion. They are individually responsible for it and religion need not be blamed for the same. Because Europe is to-day tired of religion she has adopted this way of condemning it. And the blind followers of West have agreed with the Western masters and began to shudder at the very mention of the word Jihad.

It is strange to see that war is justified for petty things but shuddered for the cause of religion. Even if we admit for a moment that religion has been spread by sword at least those civilized people who raise sword under the pretence of civilization have no justification to criticise it. In the ideal of East and West there is a difference of principle. In the eyes of the West religion and things akin to it, nay the very existence of God is doubtful whereas East believes in religion and has faith in God, and especially Islam asserts

everything to be in obeisance to His laws it lays down that reward for actions in conformity to His commandments is Paradise. But in the West the very conception of Hell and Heaven is absent. These are the very reasons why there is so great a difference between the two points of views.

If one desires to understand the true feelings of a Muslim and measure his depths of faith and spirit of sacrifice he needs only to peruse the lives of the Prophet's disciples. From that it would be clear that in the eyes of those who are firm of faith and believers in the hereafter material greatness counts for nothing. To them sacrifice is the path that would lead them to their goal; they are not worshippers of Mammon and slaves of self. To those belonging to the latter category death is the end of the joys of life whereas to a Muslim it is the beginning of a new and a more vigorous one. To him death is not gloom but a perpetual light showing joys eternal. In short, what is end for others is a mere beginning for a Muslim. The feelings of a true 'Mujahid' is a force before which all the material powers have to bow and because the world was ignorant of its zest it condemned it ungenerously and tried to discredit Islam. History bears witness to the fact that Muslims always kept their word, honoured their pledge and dealt most generously with their opponents. The Holy Quran says refuse aid even to Muslims against them with whom you have entered into agreement. No better example of justice can be given.

It is a well-known fact that the Prophet and his few disciples were driven away from their native place and were subjected to most severe torments and can any weak group win the stronger group of the majority by force of arms? The Quran says you are permitted to fight if subjected to cruelty and hardship. They were permitted to fight when cruelty had gone beyond bounds. Another verse in the Quran says there is no compulsion in religion. The paths of righteousness and evil are clear. At another place it says it is from thy Lord, whosoever wills let him accept and whosoever desires let him reject. The punishment in the hereafter is for those who reject. Another verse says that God does not forbid you from doing good to those

who do not fight against you for your religion and do not drive you from your homes Verily, God befriends the just and the doer of good He forbids you to keep good relations only with those that fight you because of your religion and drive you from your homes In many places the Quran ordains cordial relations with non-Muslim relatives you are only forbidden to establish religious and political relations and this because that Islamic ideal may not be destroyed

THE LAW OF RISE AND FALL IN THE QURAN.

19

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Mu'hammād who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

There is no doubt that the same God who made this universe without aid or weariness and bound them by a system also made the laws relating to rise and fall, growth and decay His greatness demanded that He should present the universe in the best form possible That perfect Being is the originator of all causes and the connecting link between one cause and another The growth or decay of the creation does not affect Him He rewards or punishes without discrimination between the Muslim and the non-Muslim, the Faithful and the Unfaithful He is independent nothing can compel Him to a certain course of action He made laws and upholds them There is a uniformity in the Laws of Nature. Why we do not find any Laws of Nature violated? Even if there is some distraction any time that too is not without cause All this is so because there is one big force behind the Universe, God, that regulates everything He is the source of all cause the factors of growth and decay are in His hands

He has made the law that unless we gather those factors on which our progress is based, He would not

help us. But even unknowingly if we utilise some factors God blesses us with the benefits that are to result therefrom. The contrary happens if we handle the wrong factors. Whether we mean it or not we aim at it or not, given the causes the effects would follow.

To trust in God and at the same time to be disloyal to Him is to pretend innocence and insult religion. Our successes or failures are not disconnected factors; there is no effect without a cause. Though all causes can be finally traced to God yet man bears a share in it. But there are many factors that are beyond man's control. It is the duty of man to utilise the forces of Nature and make the best use of the factors around him and not blame religion for his personal shortcomings. If a religion teaches you slothfulness and dependence on others it is not true religion; then believers are in the wrong. Islam condemns indolence and dependence. It gives preference to the giver over the receiver; it speaks of beggars in harsh terms. The Hadis says the upper hand is better than the lower. At another place the Hadis says that the face of the beggar shall be hung down on the day of requital.

In the Quran promise has been made to the Faithful that there is honour for them both here and in the hereafter provided they are truly Faithful. A verse says that it is our duty to help the Faithful. Another verse says that God does not transform a nation unless it transforms its self. Yet another verse says that if you help God He will help you. From this it is clear that promises to help has been made provided you follow His laws, i.e., you should utilise those forces and factors that are essential for your progress. The more you utilise those forces the greater the progress you make.

In all the creation man is the only being that is gifted with immense capacity for growth. Unless those potential qualities are utilised success is well nigh impossible. God has gifted us with these potentialities. He has made us the master of all the creation and has ordained us to utilise them for our best interest. He has gifted us with the sense of judgment. Indeed He is our great guide and a helper. But to derive the full benefits we must abide by His laws; if we go astray we have to bear the brunt.

From the beginning of time man has passed many stages. His life is the sum total of the knowledge and experience which had been growing from time to time and shall continue to do so in future. The Quran taught the use of reason and stressed upon thinking; it ordained the study of the book of nature. It has presented the rise and fall of past nations in most eloquent terms and has directed man's attention towards the same. Most part of the Quran abounds with these. The Quran is not a book of stories that we have the stories told in run. In it we find only those parts of the stories of which bear some lesson. Similarly it is not a book to teach arts and sciences and rules and regulations; nonetheless it directs man to the right path by stressing upon the utilisation of past experiences. Human progress is the other name of knowledge and experience stored by man from the past and those added by the present generation. Looking back to past alone would not avail to strengthen the human edifice; the new generation must exert and add to its brilliance. All the great research scholars, excavators and investigators have admitted that all their achievements are but an infinitesimal mote in comparison to the hidden treasures of earth; they further admit that they are but school children in the great academy of universe. To bring forth the hidden treasures to light is the task of human mind; much depends on their exertion. Even if all the coming generations exert to that end the boundless sea of hidden treasures would not get exhausted. The Quran says that if all the trees be turned into pen and if seven more seas are added to those existing even then they will not suffice to gain access to all the Heavenly knowledge. Another verse says that people can know only that much as much as He wants to show.

As God's knowledge is unlimited in the like manner there is no limit to the extent of His religion; likewise there is no limit to our thirst. However limited our powers be and however much they might be exhausted in the quest yet our desire remains unabated.

'The world is a place of continuous movement. Stoppage at any place marks the death of the traveller.'

According to one tradition things around Heaven are nothing very seductive but these around Hell are inviting in the extreme. It means the crown of success is put only on those who strive and those who sacrifice their all—person and property—for the good of their community or nation. Whereas those who indulge in pleasures have to bear the brunt of their actions. The reward and punishment that are true here hold good in the hereafter. They who bear hardship, make sacrifices for Truth and do good actions deserve Paradise. And those who work only for personal ends and for their own pleasure, rebuke Truth and treason against the cause of the country and the community deserve Hell. The world is a place of action and the hereafter a place of reward or punishment. Even though sometimes we are rewarded or punished in this very world the final dispensation of our true reward and punishment will take place only in the next world.

The Quran says that you will be rewarded for every iota of what you do the same is true of punishment. Another verse says there will be no cruelty on any one. We are aware of every particle of good or bad that you do we are the examiner of the records. In one Hadith we have God saying, O, people this reward or punishment is the result of your own actions, the record of which we have kept. If any one is rewarded he needs thank God and if punished blame his own self for it is the result of one's own doing that appears in the form of Heaven or Hell.

ADMISSION OF IGNORANCE IS ITSELF WISDOM.

22

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

It is evident that capacities of individuals vary they are influenced by their own observa-

tions When man begins to ponder over something new he begins to think of it in terms of that which he knows Then he searches in it those factors with which he is acquainted He tries to think out the points of resemblance, this whole thing is called postulation and repeated observation and testing is experiment It is impossible for anyone to draw a true picture in the canvas of his imagination without having seen a thing and having no notion of the same At best he can postulate Hence the existence of God is beyond human comprehension because we have no like of Him before us Nonetheless we cannot but believe in His existence because there must be an architect of the Universe and the system and organisation that we find in Nature bespeaks the existence of an organiser Atheists really uphold that a creation is possible without a creator and an organisation without an organiser This in itself is a claim which they uphold and which they wish others to believe without any proof If we only ponder over the claims of this belief it will be found that it is based on sheer ignorance It is the duty of the propounders of the theory to show any other example where a plan exists without a designer, or a mechanism without a mechanic Secondly their claim only proves that they have not seen and hence failed to grasp, understand and feel His presence But this is mere ignorance and ignorance is no proof of any claim

The existence of God can be proved by reason but incomparable as He is He is beyond human comprehension postulation and experiment is out of question in realms super-human How can mortal beings be their own creator and organiser? Atheism is thus based not only on ignorance but on lack of reason Human knowledge is after all limited The Quran says to those who question about human soul 'answer that it is in the sphere of the knowledge of the Lord your knowledge is limited' In one place it refers to man as being cruel and ignorant, that is, it refers to man's interference in realms beyond his sphere and which he does not even understand He, despite his ignorance, claims knowledge And when his knowledge does not determine a fact and does not reach the truth then instead of admitting his ignorance he denies the truth,

Indeed man is ungrateful. There is a verse which says that there was a time when man was non-existent and was not deserving of any mention (we make mention of things that exist and when he was non-existent who knew of him to make any mention). Then it proceeds saying we created man of a compound matter, a seeing, a feeling and a responsible being. Then it pointed out to man both the paths—the path of gratitude and that of ungratefulness and left the choice to him. There is no denying the fact that the more one advances in knowledge, the more he realises his own ignorance. The things which a few days back could not even have been imagined are now proved by modern researches to be facts. If the things we deny to-day due to our ignorance be proved to-morrow then we will have to hang down our heads in shame on our own ignorance. From the beginning it had continued to do so. As there is a limit to our sight and to our sense of perception so also there may be a limit to our power of reasoning. Is it anyway necessary that all the mysteries and secrets of Nature be revealed to us, especially those which are not connected with observation and experiment? Is not it a fact that in some respects the children of to-day know even more things than many a philosopher of old. It is equally possible that of things we are ignorant to-day our future generations may be aware of. This being so how is it justified to deny the existence of its possibility simply because it is beyond our scope of observation and experiment?

Another common folly with the people is that what is against their nature they condemn it as being against reason. This so happens because they believe reason to be subservient to their observation and experiment. When their experiments fail to prove anything they charge it with absurdity. The existence of God is above our experiment and rightly speaking beyond our comprehension. We cannot see air, the same is true of the soul, yet they can be felt and their influence perceived. It is nothing strange if human mind is unaware of the realities of the hereafter. The same is true of the miracles of the Prophets—revelations, 'miraj' and so forth. We will not be able to understand them unless we are ourselves under those circumstances. It is impossible to make reason the

supreme judge in all matters. Before one makes a decision the witnesses need to be examined and where the witnesses are false it ill-behoves any one to deny its possibility. Under such circumstances it is advisable that a search be made for the real witnesses. Thus instead of indulging in han-split controversies in matters theological we must try to study the prophets and be convinced of their truth. It is a fact that those noble souls who were honest and truthful in their daily life will never stoop to say lies regarding God. They speak to us through their knowledge and their experience. If we do not understand a thing because we have not experienced it we are not blamable nonetheless we cannot deny it either. As to the existence of God and prophets the necessity of religion, the proof for revelations, almost all the nations are agreed on principle. And it is unlikely for all to unite on things absurd. Further it is a fact more clear than the sun itself that religion has brought in reforms which stand unchallenged in their effects.

A MUSLIM DOES NOT DIE EVEN AFTER DEATH.

23

All praises to Allah the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Brethren in Islam! The daily change of night and day, the change of seasons, the coming of spring after winter, of joy after sorrow, of hope after despair are things inter-mingled with our everyday life. If one takes account of his past deeds one would realise the errors the repetition of which would even according to him be disastrous. One's soul is always anxious to correct its past errors. There is no man of feeling who would not like to clean dirty spots from the canvas of his life. Many people seem desirous to be re-born so that on the basis of their past experiences they would try to keep this new lease of life pure and above criticism. Every one wants

The real life is a continuous struggle which does not end even with the separation of the soul from the body

According to one tradition one who leaves useful knowledge after him or leaves behind good work whose benefit continues after him or leaves back good children they pray for him (and keep his memory fresh) then he is living as regards his actions are concerned. Life is action. Man is a compound of body and soul. The body is dependent on food. The connection of the soul with the body is impossible unless the latter is in healthy condition.

It the Quran makes mention of those people who were destroyed because of their neglect of the laws of Nature, it at the same time makes mention of those noble souls that were blessed with prophethood and gifted with huge empires. It speaks of justice and fairness of David, Solomon, Joseph etc. It speaks in eloquent terms of the might, power, greatness, and justice of Alexander. One verse reads that we send the Prophets with laws, taught them to differentiate between truth and falsehood, we created iron which has immense utility. God reveals these to those who would sacrifice for truth, remember God—great and mighty, He is not dependent on your aid; your very existence depends on him, utilise the power of iron. In the verse reference is made to all those inventions and discoveries on which rests the progress of the modern age. To-day only those nations are at the helm of power that are captains of industry and are masters of the forces that make for power.

FASTING IS A TEST OF FAITH AND SINCERITY.

20

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Of all forms of supplication fasting is the one with which show and insincerity has the least to do.

It is the best test of trust and sincerity. Every man that fasts promises his God to abstain from eating and from all sorts of physical indulgences from 'Sehri to Aftar'. Nothing else can compel him to fulfil his faith and sincerity. From morn till eve, in solitude or in company, he sticks to his word. He does not stoop to eating or drinking in solitude. It does not matter if no human eyes see him, he feels the presence of God and suffice for him that his Creator sees him. There is no force more powerful than the belief in an Omniscient and Omnipresent God. This alone prompts him to stand the test of Fasting. In fasting one is to abstain even from things which are otherwise legal. It is to gain mastery over our low cravings, in short to make the spirit triumph over the flesh. There are two bases to make one good and temperate: to check him from evil and induce him to do good. When one's attention is withdrawn from the low desires, one is naturally drawn to higher things. You can well imagine that when one is forbidden the use of things otherwise legal, how much the power of restraint increases in one for things which are already illegal, and it is likely that such a one would gradually grow to be really good and temperate. Ramzan is a month of spiritual training wherein one gets used to temperance. No wonder God speaks of it as the best form of worship. He says that of all the good actions the reward is tenfold and Fasting which is kept exclusively for Me (since there is no room for insincerity) its reward is many fold i.e., there is no limit to it. In one Hadith we have that in the Heaven there is a door called 'Riyan' and only those will enter Paradise through it who observed fast.

Fasting is one of the essentials of Islam. Its denial is 'Kufr' and its unnecessary avoidance sinful. It was also compulsory on the nations before the advent of Islam, preserving its essential nature. Islam added beauty to it, differentiating it from starvation. It permitted eating and drinking at night, nay recommended 'Sehri' to facilitate Fasting. It excused the sick from Fasting and allowed them to make up the balance when they attain health. The Holy Quran says: O ye believers, Fasting has been prescribed on you as it was prescribed on those before you so that you may become good (or get used to it) and those of you

that are sick make up the balance when you gain health. Another verse says the month of Ramzan is that when the Quran was revealed there is guidance in it for the people i.e., in it are principles differentiating good from bad. In this month Fasting is compulsory on those in senses and in good health, but they who are sick or on journey may make up the balance later.

In some religions Fasting is abstinence from certain kinds of eatables. In that case many a poor and even some sick rich are keeping perpetual fast, for example, to abstain from eating flesh or to live on vegetables or simply on fruits. Such abstinence does not deserve to be called fasting. It does not offer one real training in self-control and patience. Now ponder for a moment over the Fast of the Muslims. From dawn till sunset taking of anything is forbidden, not only this but various actions have been prescribed that would assist the purification of our soul. In one Hadis we have that there are some who do not enjoy the fruit of Fasting. They abstain from eating and drinking, even keep awake at night but do not abstain from other evil things, from telling lies, backbiting and so forth. From this it is clear that Fasting is a real spiritual training. Even after keeping Fast if one does not spiritually elevate, become good and temperate, it is a miserable misfortune. Another Hadis says that Fasting is a shield when the fasting one must abstain from evil talks and guard against evil, even if some body attacks you or speaks evil of you do not retort but just say I am fasting.

During sickness abstinence from certain things is more conducive than medicine itself. In some diseases we need to eject unhealthy matter. It is very necessary to clear the field of weeds and germs for fruitful growth. In the like manner Fasting kills the germs of sin in man and in its place sows seeds of temperance and goodness. The word for Fasting in Arabic is 'Saum' which means to abstain, abstain not merely from eating and drinking but from all sorts of physical indulgences. Ramzan like other Islamic injunctions is also to strengthen social solidarity. Firstly, checks have been put on individuals, who are made to realise the pangs of hunger

and thirst, and are secondly prompted to benevolence and kindness towards their less fortunate brethren Hence increased charity has been recommended during Ramzan A Hadis explicitly lays down that if during Ramzan one does not abstain from telling lies and doing evil God has no need for his starvation Another Hadis tell us that in Ramzan the Holy Prophet was the most charitable so much so that nothing used to remain with him

SHAB-E-QADR OR THE NIGHT OF MAJESTY

21

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

Brethren! God has given a very high status to soul the true facts of which would be known only in the hereafter with our limited knowledge we can not even understand our own self Many truths regarding soul would be revealed only after death At present our standard of judgment is material Whatever we hear or see we do with our physical senses and we are influenced to a large extent by our surroundings We are lured by things sweet and beautiful, in short we are enamoured by earthly pleasures What, if we can only realise the emptiness of the show But alas, that realisation comes only too late in the day

God, in all His mercy, selected people to guide humanity and to make them aware of things hidden to common eye these guides were selected on merit of their spiritual attainment They were sent revelations with which to lead the people The salvation of humanity lies in following the foot-steps of the Prophets The Prophets came to this world as exemplars and particularly Muhammad, the last of the Prophets, who gave the world such a simple and workable plan of action as stands unchallenged.

to evade the prick of conscience, nay some even look to Death to give them relief. But it is as lamenting over an arrow that has been shot or vainly crying for the time that is past. Will depression and dejection avail anything but tell upon your health. That which is past can never be re-traced and neither can we avoid the feelings of our past faults. On one hand Reason argues for patience, but on the other hand the heart continues to keep one impatient. Admitting the advisability of Reason's decision yet man refrains from accepting it. Philosophy holds that one must bear the brunt of one's own actions but the spirit is too weak to bear it.

The world is a place of Causes and Effects. A cause given produces certain effects. A wise person is one who instead of vainly lamenting over the past prepares for the future—gathers his energies and moves to action. He fixes the goal and strives with all his might and main to reach it, nay awakens his community to its duty and spurs it to move towards the desired end. The welfare of a nation depends on the well-being of its individual members and of the community as a unit. And there are factors governing each of them and unless these factors are utilised success is well nigh impossible. The future of such a community cannot be of a sure nature. It is the duty of every one gifted with foresight to take a thorough account of his past, take lessons from it and try to avoid the repetition of those errors the burnt of which he had to bear. If he cannot make up the loss of his past faults at least he must try to refrain from their repetition. The most fortunate man is he who does not become a bad example for others but wisely takes lessons from others. And lucky are they who become models and exemplars not only for their family but for the whole community and the nation. Ponder over the 'Namaz' in Islam in the 'Faz' and besides, in 'Sunnat' and 'Nafil' the faithful repeats the Surah Al-Fatiha wherein is stated: O' God guide us on the Right Path and grant us strength to tread the Right Path, (and the Right Path is not something chalked out by us) the Path that has been trodden over by the righteous and the blessed ones. A verse in the sixteenth chapter of the Quran relating to the righteous ones says they are those whom God has blessed they are the Prophets, the Saints, the Truthful ones and the martyrs and adds how pure they

are This verse is a commentary on the verse of Sura Fatiha quoted above We are asked in our five daily prayers to follow the path of such luminaries and we pray God to give us strength to conquer the weakness of the flesh by the strength of the soul In other words everyday we are spurred several times to follow the footsteps of the righteous ones and at the same time to look to God to strengthen our will and determination One verse says that they who sacrifice their person and property for us or in the attempt to reach the goal we shall show them our path (the right path) and bring them to success From this it is clear that a Muslim's life is a crusade, through and through and his crowning quality is the life of the Prophet whose characteristic feature is crusade against the lower self Anything material or spiritual is got only through effort The thing which is more precious requires greater effort When a faithful disdains the lower cravings shuns the so-called joys of earth, he enters an arena where there is celestial happiness for soul, where every object is a thing of joy for ever The very thought of such a Paradise offers us pleasure and the faithful looks for the day when he would be free from corporeal bondage and be enjoying in the 'limitless Abode of Peace' A Faithful does not look to death as the end of life he soars much higher he strives for something eternal Islam has proposed sincere repentance to avoid the effects of this limited earthly sojourn to supersede the life perpetual It has likened despair to distrust in the All-Merciful and asks us to be always hopeful of His unbounded mercy Blessed are they who have faith in the Last Day and are preparing themselves for it good action and service to humanity is then marked characteristic their purpose of life is individual and social welfare God has provided factors to arouse the careless and educate the learned The Mussalmans must remember the days when the Quran was first revealed, the Quran which infused life into a lifeless people That blessed month is now come in which the Muslims gave the world the message of service and sacrifice Conic, let us muster under the same standard and gain glory both here and in the hereafter

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR OWN RUIN

24

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

O great and glorious Lord, Thou art above our prayers and praises All that we are and all that we have are Thine gifts We grow in the shower of Thy Mercy If tongues be put in all the particles of the earth even that shall fall short of returning thanks for Thy bounteous blessings, mercy and munificence The power of tongue and pen fails to recount Thy favours This incompetence bespeaks our limitation and marks us out as servitors of Him who is the Master of all This realisation (of our littleness and His greatness) is Iman' this is Islam The heart that one sinks in the sea of 'Tawheed' swims for ever it becomes cleansed and pure it reaches the Divine precincts, the very goal towards which we exert.

The month of Ramzan is past Ead followed The people celebrated it merrily, greeting and embracing each other A wave of unity, of love, of brotherliness ran through the entire Muslim world But ah! there are a few unfortunate houses that remained the centre of sorrow even on this day of universal rejoicing There are many who look askance for a full meal, there are many children who have been denied the loving protection of their father, there are others who are sick and invalid and there are yet others lying uneasy on their death bed. Blessed are they who do not forget misery in happiness, sickness in health, and death in life, nay help and protect others regarding their sorrows and sufferings as their own O' Muslims! take lessons from the life of the Prophet and follow the footsteps of this greatest of guide who launched a vigorous campaign against capitalism and took upon himself the

task of protecting the poor and the weak. He found the world enslaved by man-made distinctions and by his universal message of Equality and Fraternity he shattered all those artificial shackles. The Quran abounds with this message of equality and democracy, but alas our leaders misinterpreted them; they withdrew the attention of the people from taking an interest in the affairs of the world. They directed their energies in the wrong channels, they adopted such wrong methods of infusing the spirit of service to others as has made the poor a diudge on society, dependent on others, with the roll of years the number of these dependents increased and as a result weakened the face of Islam, the force once famous for its readiness, vigour and vitality. Forbearance, patience and perseverance earned them honour and glory. These raised their status in the eyes of the world. It was their spirit of service and sacrifice that won them the distinction they attained. Unfortunately for the Muslims their leadership passed into the hands of those that were themselves in no way practical and far away from serving as models. Instead of following the footsteps of their worthy ancestors and infusing in them a sincere zeal for works and a true spirit of service they lulled them to inactivity and sleep. They either could not explain the people the true significance of patience and contentment or being desirous of usurping their wealth they gave vicious interpretations. They themselves became idle and easy-going, a prey to earthly attractions, greedy and avaricious. Their speeches and writings which aimed at diverting the attention of the people for everything worldly are largely to be blamed in making people idle and inactive. They dulled the enthusiasm of the people and destroyed their zeal of action. Many preached this wrong doctrine out of sincerity and they themselves thus lost all interest in the economic, political and social welfare of the people. It is for this reason that most of our sermons show an utter lack of these subjects. A few of the baneful results that followed therefrom are the following. The sermons in the mosques and elsewhere became devoid of everything political, social and economic, and people began to look with suspicion if any such subject were mentioned. As a result we began to lose all interest in them and consequently we have lost the leadership which was once ours.

Our place has now been taken up by those who though they be backward in religious sphere have taken a leading interest in those subjects. The pity of cities is that if there is a talk or discourse on any of these topics our people refuse to call it a 'Khutba' of 'Waz' but style it only as 'lecture' (and as not so much worthy of attention). But it is a fact that the sermon of our ancestors used to inspire the hearers with a zest of life, of action, of sacrifice. Sometimes while delivering sermons the Prophet used to glow with fervour and as a result the hearers were aroused to action. Any action that can give a nation a status over others is an 'ibadat'. Any action that results in good is 'Ibadat' (prayer). If this is so there is no reason why those actions be discarded or disregarded that go towards national welfare. To-day our ignorance is due to this carelessness. It is high time that we change our course of action, study these subjects and preach them so that we once again assume the leadership that was once ours. The giving of 'Zakat' and 'Fitrah' are not to make people dependent but must encourage all concerned to attempt and achieve, succeed and progress. We must create in us the love of action, the spirit to sacrifice and the zeal to live a dignified life.

QURAN—THE ONLY PLAN OF ACTION OF THE MUSLIMS.

25

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

After eleven months Ramzan came to arouse the dead and awake the asleep. For the last thirteen centuries it has been arousing the Muslims and shall continue to do so till the end of time. It weans us from physical indulgences, from earthly devotion, and infuses in us fresh vigour. The 'Taraweeh', the 'Zakat', the Fast itself breathes in us a new life. At present the progress of society, the growth of nations

is based on demonstrations, on celebrations of memorial days and so forth. In the Ramzan the Muslim Community goes through its plan of action as offered in the Quran. During this period the Mussalmans go through a strenuous spiritual exercise and prepare themselves to face the battle of life with added energy, vigour and courage. It is possible that after the Ramzan the old temptations may come again, yet there is no denying the fact that the hearts of the Muslims are much more purified now than what they were a month back and as such more in a position to resist temptations. If the heart is not purified during this month the layer of sin only tends to multiply. A Hadis says that every sin means a dark spot on the heart (i.e., the purity of the heart is impaired). If repentance is not resorted to, the black spot spread (i.e., evil encroaches upon the good). Our soul is subservient to our nature. The former dyes itself in the colour of the latter. And when one paint becomes fixed it is difficult and sometimes impossible for it to receive any other colour. So it is very essential that children are coloured in good hues from the very start. It is for this reason that we are asked to train our children to say prayers from the age of seven and even to chastise them for the same at the age of ten. This will imbue them with Islamic spirit. This spirit is achieved not through Philosophy and postulation but through practice. Islamic environment is its best training ground. A Hadis says that every child born is a Muslim and it is the parents that deviate him from the right religion.

The Ramzan trains one in Islamic spirit. We are repeatedly asked not to lose this opportunity. We are commanded to conquer the flesh and a great reward is promised us. A Hadis says that there is a night in the last ten nights which is better than a thousand nights, nay a thousand months, look out for that night. It means that by this means the last ten nights at least may be spent in prayer and supplication which may ultimately triumph the spirit over the flesh. In one Hadis we have that on every odd night (such as twenty-first, twenty-third etc.) the Prophet used to say especial prayers and used to spend the last ten days in the Mosque. This he con-

turned till his death. This is called 'Aitekaf'. During these nights he also used to awake his family members. One Hadis says that he who prays the whole night in all sincerity on the night of Majesty all his sins shall be forgiven. All sins are forgiven by sincere repentance except the rights of one's fellow-men. This means that our sins are pardoned provided our repentance is sincere i.e., if we repent and promise to lead a virtuous life in future.

The month of Ramzan especially the last nights enlightens a Muslim's heart with the light of Faith, the light Divine, one who is thus enlightened can never fall a prey to temptations. Unfortunate are they who get this chance and yet do not utilise Islam aims at purifying and elevating the soul. They who get used to sin do not shun it. If even after sincere repentance one is lured by the evil it only proves that the repentance was not up to the mark. Richmen! create this spirit of repentance in you, ponder over your duties and if you are to pay the 'Zakat' see that you have fulfilled the demand. They to whom it is due are loitering round your doors, do you respond to the cry of the needy and legitimately take pride in giving them? And if you have become fond of people loitering about your house and that you are indifferent and that you maltreat them, remember instead of gaining any reward you will get punishment in return. You pay Zakat for His sake, then pay it honourably to those who deserve it, the needy and the poor. It must be remembered that they who receive the Zakat are redeeming you of your duty and of an incumbent responsibility. He needs to be thanked for helping us in paving our way to Heaven. Besides your deserving kith and kin, the needy and the poor it needs to be paid to help the orphans and the widows, it is also our duty to spend liberally in the cause of religion, in missionary activities and so forth. It is our bounden duty to acquaint the people with the Truth. Sometimes people while spending money in good cause use such terms as spoil all the reward that would have otherwise resulted. They give either to oblige someone or through somebody's pressure. And when they give to some poor man or even a missionary they give with a contempt. The Quran condemns all

this in unsparring terms. It says that good words are better than that almsgiving which hurts. Another verse says that they speak of their obligation, tell them it is Islam's obligation on you. At another place it says, O' Ye Faithful do not loose the reward of your Zakat by speaking of it as a favour.

The greatest significance of Ramzan is the revelation of the Quran, a complete plan of action. Direct guidance of the Quran is the need and this is only possible if you read it with understanding and for the purpose of practicing it. If the Muslim Community once again gets into direct touch with the Quran it will again breathe with life. The Quran is the first and the last plan of action of the Muslims.

EAD THE STANDARD BEARER OF HAPPINESS

26

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

The most glorious is that eternal God whose praise shall be sung till the end of time. He alone is great and glorious. He is perfect and eternal, others are ephemeral. He is the Creator, all others His creature. He is mighty and strong, all others weak before Him. He is not subject to death or decay. He is One, the Indivisible, the Uncomparable. Even the great Prophets and the angels are but His servitors. To-day the parting of Ramzan will testify to our firmness of resolution, our motives and our actions.

The Ead crescent is seen on the Western sky but looks weak and pale, perhaps it is moved to this situation by the record of our deeds. It has put a pale veil on its face being unable to stand the sight of the blood-smeared picture of human actions. The horizon

where the moon has appeared is itself blood-red and this not without meaning. It reminds the warring humanity of its crimes and sins but the crescent also reminds us of the silver lining in the dark cloud of His mercy that shall forgive man his bloody actions but that when one has repented and repented sincerely Admission of guilt and sincere penitence shall win His bounteous compassion that shall cleanse and purify.

O' Fad crescent put a veil over our sins. We are enmeshed in earthly attractions, in physical indulgences we are far away from Islamic atmosphere and Islamic surroundings. There are attractions on all sides, the material joys are inviting, the physical pleasures are seducing, the flesh is being attracted by the magnet of silver and gold. A nation grows through culture and education, unless the wave of life surges through the nation's vein it is dead. To preserve national honour and integrity the spirit of service and sacrifice is the only need, equally essential is acquaintance with one's past, but alas these are the very things that are on the wane in us. Our spiritual force before which the world shook is now weakened by internal dissension and division. The wave of scepticism from West is spreading its poisonous gas among our youth. With all this every heart looks for the revival of past glory, of old fraternity, of old spirit of mutual sympathy and co-operation of old zeal of service and sacrifice. After a deep slumber we mutual sympathy and co-operation, of old zeal have at last awoke, we have begun to realise our own failings and this is a good omen.

Bear witness we have kept the Fast and spent the month in doing all that was good. We said the 'Taraweeh' and we paid the 'Zakat'. We did our best to soar to higher realms and probably our actions would no longer force us to shed blood then alone will our Ead be Fad in the truest sense of the term.

Bless us, rich and poor with real joys and happiness. Infuse in us the spirit of serving and protecting the orphan and the widow, of educating and refining the children. Make us the moth of the lamp of Islam. May the believers in God and His Prophet rise up once again to proclaim the Truth with such

determination fervour and zeal as would surprise the world and show them that these are the followers of Muhammed (May Peace be upon him) the standard bearers of 'Tawheed' who made the world echo with the message of Peace, who acquainted the world with the natural religion who sacrificed their person and property in the way of God, who followed the footsteps of Abu Bakr, Umar, O-man and Ali (May their souls be blessed) Our true Ead will be on the day when these traits once again become our own

Every particle is calling out, O' Muslim remember your forgotten lesson You are unfortunate if thirty days of fast prayers and reading of Quran has not made you a better man If these have failed pray what remedy shall cure you O' Muslims arise, and with a change of dress change your hearts also and by so doing make your joys lasting Help and educate your less fortunate brethren Give 'Zakat' and 'Fitrah' to whom they are due and thus save society from the curse of beggary and raise the status of the community, Besides your adherence to the 'Pillars' of Islam be true to your parents kith and kin and neighbours too Be honest be true to your promise, honour your pledge refrain from evil be temperate, be kind and considerate, forgive others and God shall forgive you These will give you the real joy of Ead

THE PATH OF ACTION

27

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate, and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues

Brethren in Islam! In sermons previous to this I have dealt with 'Namaz, Roza and Zakat', then meaning and philosophy I have also dealt with the cause of our present degeneration and the need of infusing ourselves with the will to act and also suggested ways to that end. I told you that we are the cause of our ruin it is our ignorance of the law of life that is responsible To-day I shall deal with them at some length

The causes that led the West to supersede the East were present from a long time, but we kept the people in darkness regarding them and we ourselves ignored their possible results. It is a fact that our education was in our hands, the medium of instruction was Eastern and our own scholars were our teachers, the curriculum was in no way alien and the patrons of learning were our own people. The object of teaching was to civilize and refine our people, our education and our welfare was the aim. If only we had realised which way the wind blew and suited our system to the requirements of the time most surely we would not have fallen a prey to the lure of the West. If only we had not contended by preaching people patience and contentment but had preached a gospel of action we would not have fallen on those bad days. If our teachers had been practical persons, fond of real knowledge, of art and industry then most surely our present state would have been something different. The secret of our success lies in our high standard of morality, in our zeal to act, in our true grasp of facts and in our capacity to compete with other nations. To succeed we must 'crusade' in every walk of life and that for His sake. We have our preachers and teachers and they do their work, the prescription is all right but the defect lies in the diagnosis of the disease.

Nations have age and there are stages in their life. As in our life we have a change of requirements from childhood to old age and many changes come upon ourselves during that period so also in the various stages in a nation's life there are marked changes in their education, culture, growth, status and so forth. The object and the ideal may be the same but the difference lies in their methods of achievement.

Nations fall victim to collective diseases, and there are differences in the diseases too. To diagnose those diseases and prescribe a really useful prescription is the work only of a good physician.

The Muslim community too has passed through various periods and the period through which she is passing at present is the most delicate. The disease is serious and there is dearth of good physicians. But

the Musalmans hold the remedy in their hands for the Quran is styled in different places as a 'guide, cure and blessing'. It has solution for all problems of all ages. It says Surely this (Quran) is the best guide leading to the right Path. It is in full the plan-of-action of the Prophet, a guide for future. But to utilise this remedy more reason than knowledge is required.

God saith that he whom He has not given the sight, no other light benefits him, i.e., he remains in darkness. It requires reason to understand, be the thing material or spiritual. We require such physician for curing our material and spiritual diseases as are not only well versed in knowledge but understand life and its problem, those who can understand economic and political intricacies and are able to offer solution for those ills, those who understand the present situation of the world and are able to furnish us with all our requirements. And they must acquaint the commonalty with these facts, warn them and guide them along right channels. By these alone can they prepare the nation to compete with their contemporaries. If they answer to all their needs they will not be in need to go to non-Muslims for the study and the understanding of the same.

Our 'Ulemas' fail to understand the modern problems and those who understand them regard religion as opposed to politics. How then can there be mutual understanding? They differ in their angle of vision and in their attitude, each has an entirely different sort of curricula, each grows in a different environment, each has a different course of action and different ideals too. The result is that there is no love lost between them, nay each is opposed to the other. There can be no doubt about the fate of the poor person, who is suffering from the disease, whose two physicians reach contrary conclusions after their diagnosis and consequently suggest prescriptions opposed to each other. A good physician is one who is not a mere specialist only in one branch but is fairly well acquainted with the other branches also.

It is high time that we shake our old lethargy and frankly admit our failings. Then there are two al-

ternatives, either we enable ourselves to take the lead or retire from the field and save the community from destruction. This holds good both for political and religious leaders, one mistake of the learned misleads a whole world. It is highly essential that our educational centres and our Mosques be turned into houses of culture, real learning and rationalism. This is only possible if we change our curricula and alter our system of education and when we have as our guide those who are thoroughly acquainted with our sundry requirements.

Brethren in Islam! the month of Haj (pilgrimage) has come. It is long since that the cry has been sent up asking us to muster at the centre at least once in our lifetime. Besides religious significance it bears many other results. How good it were if only the leaders of the Muslim community put their heads and shoulders together and work out an useful plan for the community as a whole and work upon it after they return to their respective countries.

THE HAJ

28

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Brethren! Of the five pillars of Islam, Haj is an important pillar. 'Namaz' and 'Roza' are mostly physical which the rich and the poor can alike perform. 'Zakat' on the other hand deals with the monetary side of the problem. It touches our purse and the money is to be utilised for the social welfare of the society. The Haj combines both phases of the question. It is incumbent on those who can afford to bear the expenses and those who are physically fit to perform it. It is compulsory once in a life time and the more times you perform the better.

It has elements of Jihad (crusade) in it. Once the Prophet addressing the womenfolk said that "you

Jihad is Haj." From this two things are clear Firstly that it is not very high of man to be content with that Jihad which even the tender ladies can perform. Secondly those who do not partake even of this Jihad are worst than ladies. Even though Haj is a difficult thing but considering the present facilities it ill behoves to call it difficult. In spite of all this if the rich fail to perform it, it only bespeaks their lack of zeal and fervour. God is all-knowing. He knew it would be difficult for the faithfuls to perform Haj every year, so He made it incumbent only once in a life time and left to our option to repeat it. There is a verse in the Holy Quran which says that God does not make demand on any one beyond his capacity. Hence it is evident that what all He has ordained is well within our capacity to perform.

The verse that deals with the Haj says that Haj is made compulsory on those who can afford it. We hear the same thing in connection with Fasting. It says that God does not intend to put you in difficulties. He only desires to smoothen your path. The purpose of religion is the elevation of the soul. He has shown us different ways to the end. To reach the goal to which the soul is destined it must go by stages and degrees, strengthening itself at every point. The more he becomes self-sacrificing the higher he soars and he realises that all his sacrifices of person and property stand no comparison to Him. His heart is full of love for Him. To inculcate this spirit comes next only to our compulsory Duties. This was found in abundance in the Prophets and as a result they become the vanguards of human force. The sacrifice of the disciples of the Prophet is enough to keep us stunned. We are asked to create the same spirit in us so as to approach near them.

If you want to succeed you will have to bear all the difficulties in its way. For petty worldly things you worry yourself. Why not show anxiety for that on which depends your salvation? The one chief characteristic of Haj is 'sacrifice' which takes us back to that sacrificing soul called Abraham. The History of Islam began with sacrifices. After performing Haj one gets closer to the spirit of sacrifice shown by Abraham. It infuses in one the true 'Muslim' spirit. We have before us the example of various prophets, more especially

of the last of the Prophets. Their spirit of sacrifice offers us true guidance. The exertion of every great man towards achieving the goal of success is worthy of emulation.

The world is a place of action. Nothing is achieved without exertion. This is the law of God. He does not stand in any need of our prayers and praises. He is self-sufficient. A verse says that if even the whole world becomes pious that would not enhance my prestige. At another place the Quran says that if all of you degenerate even to the very lowest depth of degradation that shall not injure my kingdom. From these it is clear that whatever we do it is for our own good.

The purpose of this international gathering at the time of Haj is noble. If we understand and work upon it, it shall bring us success both spiritual and material. A verse says O' Prophet proclaim to all the message of Haj so that all may muster at the centre and join in the deliberations for their mutual good. The first thing that we learn is that whatever we do is for our own good. God is above these. The Arabic word 'Insan' comes from 'uns' or sympathy and Islam is the message of Peace and sympathy. One verse says that he who enters the Kaba enters the House of Refuge. Think or yourself if the meaning of sympathy is any other than Peace. Every individual attains the much cherished goal of Peace by accepting and working upon the message of Islam, the message of Peace. When he performs the Haj he gains the blessings of Abraham, one of the first proclaimers of Islam. Before going to Haj the Muslims are commanded to perform congregational prayers, daily, weekly and yearly by these they are to infuse social and corporate life in them. These shall create better relations among the Muslims. These shall strengthen their social solidarity. The 'Friday' and the 'Eid' sermons are expected to acquaint the people beside other things with political and economic matters. These are excellent ways of educating the people and our slackness in this regard is an unpardonable sin. Our 'Ulemas' and the wealthy ones are equally to be blamed for this. If Muslims are organised in their local centres and send their good representatives to 'Haj' to work out a common plan of action in conjunction with others the future of the Muslims will be bright. A

verse in the Quran refers to the same thing. It says that a body must gather together (at a centre) to understand religions so that they may offer guidance to others.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAJ

29

All praises to Allah, the merciful and Compassionate and may His choicest blessings be on Muhammad who has been sent as a guide to humanity, making him the ideal prophet, an embodiment of the noblest and the most cherished virtues.

Brethren in Islam!

To-day I shall deal with the significance of Haj. Haj as has been explained previously, is that form of prayer which surpasses the rest. In it we have the lesson of 'Jihad in the way of the Lord,' in other words it teaches us to sacrifice our all in the name of Allah. The Lord saith they are the Faithful ones who believe in the Lord and the Prophet and do not doubt it and who sacrifice their person and property in the way of the Lord. They alone are true in their claim of Islam. In many places in the Holy Quran mention is made of Jihad immediately after Haj. Apart from this there is much semblance between Haj and Jihad. At the appointed time the Hajis muster on the plains of Arafat all in one uniform. The scene is unique in its display of equality and democracy. The pilgrims have better commanded to refrain from indulging in anything that causes dissension. They are asked to be pious, temperate and loving. They are ordained to shun pride and arrogance and are asked to be meek and humble. They are asked not to waste their time but to utilise them usefully. They are asked to show sympathy to their less fortunate brethren, to aid and help them. Among the Hajis we find a uniformity and a discipline found only among well-trained armies. The pilgrims are the soldiers of the Lord who have gathered to battle against the greatest enemy of man—his baser self and his lower cravings. Unless we conquer the flesh the spirit does not triumph and this triumph of spirit is the very purpose of Haj.

The gathering of the Hajis displays the glory of Islam. It creates amongst the Muslims a spirit of meekness, of tolerance, of love and brotherliness. Usually on days of rejoice one tends to be haughty but here we have rejoicing coupled with meekness and combined with repentance. The Hajis supplicate before the Lord in all humility, praying for the forgiveness of their sins and beseeching divine blessing.

Before one sets for the Haj he has to clear all dues and clean his slate of all dust and dirt and has to ask forgiveness if he had wronged any. One must go to Haj with one's own honest earnings. On the way he is ordained not to hurt any, nay not even the insects. And when one puts on the 'Ithram' he must do so with the feeling that he has turned a new leaf, that he has discarded the garb of 'greed and grab' and has put on a clean dress, white and pure. And when he prostrates before the Lord he must do so with the hope of being blessed with Divine favours. He must beseech God for His blessing, mercy and munificence.

The Hajj prays the Lord saying I am present before thee O'Lord, You who are one having no second. You alone deserve all praise. All that we have and all that we are bear testimony to thy munificence. All the kingdom is thine. You are the Lord and there is none to share with thee. In this short prayer the Hajj admits his own littleness and bears testimony to the glory and greatness of the Lord. This makes man meek and humble. It makes him God-fearing and leads him to piety. But to have the desired effect it should be translated into action and not stop with mere utterance.

The Holy Quran while speaking of Prophet Abraham's unselfishness lays stress on his sacrificial spirit. Every Muslim is expected to create in him the same laudable spirit. In Hajj there are many things which do not meet the eyes of a superficial observer. It seems as if a lover is doing something in obedience to the commands of his beloved one. He does not even ponder over his doings but offers unquestioned obedience to authority. Whatever the Hajj does he does it of all purity and sincerity. His sincerity is beyond doubt. It admits of no alloy and what else is

'Faith' but sincerity They whose hearts are pure wait only for the commandment of the Lord Does not a soldier obey his commander? Does not a patient submit to the prescription of the doctor? Then does not the Lord have even this much claim of obedience from His servitors It is for this very reason that we have been asked to follow the foot-steps of the Prophet and we have the injunction that whenever the Lord and His Prophet commands you do not hesitate this is the sign of 'Iman' Yes, if anyone else orders you may enquire into the reason here it is not only justifiable but commendable A Hadis says that some one once enquired the Prophet as to what was the best act and reply came "Belief in God and His Prophet" When asked what next the Prophet said 'Jihad in the way of the Lord' and when again asked 'what next' the Prophet said "Haj performed in the manner required" In another Hadis we have that the reward of this is Paradise Yet another Hadis says that a man who is in a position to perform Haj and does not do so is at liberty to count himself as a non-Muslim, a Jew or a Christian, it does not matter Another Hadis records that he who performs Haj and avoids sin is pure like the new born babe



LIST OF BOOKS PUBLISHED

BY

THE JAMIAT-UL-ULEMA OF BURMA

| No. | Name of Books. | Propagation Series & their number. |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | The Decision of 'Farman-i-Mustafwi' according to the Mohamedan Law (in Urdu) | 1 |
| 2 | do do (in Gujrati) | |
| | do do (in Burmese) | |
| | Thuhfa-i-Ramzan Shareef (A present for the months of Ramzan) (in Urdu) | 2 |
| 5 | do do (in Burmese) | |
| | Risalah Akhbarul Zalalah (A Pamphlet on Earthquake) (in Burmese) | 3 |
| | A Pamphlet on the Virtues or Merits of Darood Shareef (in Burmese) | 4 |
| 8 | Risalah Tha-heyat-ul Islam (A Pamphlet on Salutation or Greetings in Islam) (in Burmese) | 5 |
| 9. | Gulzar-i-Sunnat Part I (in Burmese) | 6 |
| 10. | A Present for the month of Ramzan in the form of a Pamphlet (in Burmese) | 7 |
| 11. | Gulzar-i-Sunnat Part II (in Burmese) | 8 |
| 12. | Hamare Aquiday (Our tenets in religion) (in Burmese) | 9 |
| 13. | Phillippa The Caesar's Niece—English | 10 |
| 14. | Gulzar-i-Hadees (in Burmese) | 11 |

LIST OF BOOKS PUBLISHED.—*Concluded*

| | | | |
|-----|--|--------------|----|
| 15. | The Killing of Animals (according to the Islamic Principles) and using their flesh as food | (in Burmese) | 12 |
| 16 | A Pamphlet on 'How Spread Islam Throughout the World (in brief) | do | 13 |
| 17 | The Teaching of Islam Series I (in English) | | 14 |
| 18 | do do II (in English) | | 15 |
| 19. | do do III (in English) | | 16 |
| 20. | Majmooa-Fatawa | (in Burmese) | 17 |
| 21 | Nesabuddin | (in Burmese) | 18 |
| 22 | Bahishty Samar I | (in Burmese) | 19 |
| 23 | do do II | (in Burmese) | 20 |
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| 25 | Fazilat-i-ilm | (in Burmese) | 22 |
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| 28 | do do III | (in Burmese) | 25 |
| 29 | do do IV | (in Burmese) | 26 |
| 30 | Savitri | (in English) | 27 |
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| 32 | Ma-labud-minho I | (in Burmese) | 28 |
| 33. | Proof of Prophet Muhammad From the Holy Bible and Way to Paradise for Eternal Life | (in English) | 30 |
| 34 | A short sketch of the Life of the Prophet | in (Burmese) | 31 |
| 35 | Friday Sermons | (in English) | 32 |

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RULES AND REGULATIONS
ACCORDING TO SEC 5
OF
THE PROPAGATION DEPARTMENT
OF
THE JAMIAT UL ULEMA OF BURMA

(a) This Department shall have no connection whatever with the Political affairs of the country

(b) All those (Muslim) Societies that are purely religious and have nothing to do with politics may be affiliated to this Department

(c) It is not necessary that the members of these societies should be Alims (learned in Religion)

(d) All the non-political Rules and Regulations of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Burma should be considered as Rules and Regulations of its Propagation Department

(e) The fund of the Propagation Department should be spent or utilised only for Propagation Work or things that are closely connected therewith

(f) Two-third of the Subscription realised in the name of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Burma may be spent on the Propagation Department

(g) The same proportion should be maintained in expenditure also

(h) The Office Bearers and Members of the Executive Committee of this Department will be exactly the same as those of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Burma

AN APPEAL TO THE MUSLIM PUBLIC

The Secretary of the Propagation Department of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Burma appeals to all the Muslims of the Province to extend their helping hand by subscribing anything they like for the benefit of the Propagation Work in Burma. All subscriptions are welcome, no matter how big or small.